



SORTING



G. W. Harrison.

*With the Miss Woods
affectionate regards
Jmas 1882.*

S E R M O N S

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL

OF

RUGBY SCHOOL,

WITH AN

ADDRESS BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

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S E R M O N S

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL

OF

RUGBY SCHOOL.

WITH AN ADDRESS BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

BY

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ADVERTISEMENT.

NOTHING is new in this little volume, except the last two Sermons. All the others, together with the Address before Confirmation, are reprinted from the octavo edition, which appeared at the beginning of the present year. I had reason to think that they might be useful if published in a smaller and cheaper form.

That the volume might contain nothing that was not addressed particularly to the same description of readers, I have omitted the Sermons which were not preached at Rugby, and also the Essay on the Interpretation of the Scriptures. This last I hope to reprint, ere long, in a separate volume, accompanied by some others, written on subjects more or less connected with it.

RUGBY, December, 1832.

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CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| <i>Heb.</i> xi. 1.—Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen | 1 |

SERMON II.

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 <i>John</i> v. 4, 5.—This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that over- cometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? | 10 |
|--|----|

SERMON III.

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>John</i> vi. 58.—This is the bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever | 21 |
|---|----|

SERMON IV.

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Acts</i> ii. 42.—And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers | 31 |
|--|----|

SERMON V.

[PREACHED ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.]

- PAGE
- 1 *Cor.* xiii. 11.—When I was a child, I spake as a child,
I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but
when I became a man, I put away childish things . 41

SERMON VI.

- John* iii. 12.—If I have told you earthly things, and ye
believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of
heavenly things? 49

SERMON VII.

- 2 *Kings* ii. 24.—There came forth two she bears out of
the wood, and tare forty and two children of them . 56

SERMON VIII.

- Matt.* xviii. 6.—Whoso shall offend one of these little
ones which believe in me, it were better for him that
a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he
were drowned in the depth of the sea 64

SERMON IX.

- Rom.* i. 16.—I am not ashamed of the Gospel of
Christ 73

SERMON X.

- John* xvi. 12, 13.—I have yet many things to say unto
you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when
he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you
into all truth 87

SERMON XI.

[PREACHED ON TRINITY SUNDAY.]

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 1 <i>Tim.</i> iii. 16.—Great is the mystery of godliness . . . | 95 |

SERMON XII.

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Gal.</i> iii. 24.—The law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ | 105 |
|---|-----|

SERMON XIII.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Luke</i> xiv. 24.—None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper | 116 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XIV.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Luke</i> xiv. 18.—They all with one consent began to make excuse | 125 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XV.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Matt.</i> x. 36.—A man's foes shall be they of his own household | 135 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XVI.

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>John</i> xiii. 13, 14.—Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet | 148 |
|---|-----|

SERMON V.

[PREACHED ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.]

PAGE

- 1 *Cor.* xiii. 11.—When I was a child, I spake as a child,
I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but
when I became a man, I put away childish things . 41

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- John* iii. 12.—If I have told you earthly things, and ye
believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of
heavenly things? 49

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- 2 *Kings* ii. 24.—There came forth two she bears out of
the wood, and tare forty and two children of them . 56

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- Matt.* xviii. 6.—Whoso shall offend one of these little
ones which believe in me, it were better for him that
a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he
were drowned in the depth of the sea 64

SERMON IX.

- Rom.* i. 16.—I am not ashamed of the Gospel of
Christ 73

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- John* xvi. 12, 13.—I have yet many things to say unto
you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when
he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you
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| 1 <i>Tim.</i> iii. 16.—Great is the mystery of godliness . . . | 95 |

SERMON XII.

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Gal.</i> iii. 24.—The law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ | 105 |
|---|-----|

SERMON XIII.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Luke</i> xiv. 24.—None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper | 116 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XIV.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Luke</i> xiv. 18.—They all with one consent began to make excuse | 125 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XV.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Matt.</i> x. 36.—A man's foes shall be they of his own household | 135 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XVI.

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>John</i> xiii. 13, 14.—Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye also ought to wash one another's feet | 148 |
|--|-----|

SERMON XVII.

PAGE

Rev. xxii. 10—12.—And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book : for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be 158

SERMON XVIII.

John xiii. 10.—He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all 170

SERMON XIX.

Luke xvii. 36, 37.—Two men shall be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord ? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together 181

SERMON XX.

1 *Pet.* iv. 11.—If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God ; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth : that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ 192

SERMON XXI.

Mark vi. 31.—And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while : for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat 201

SERMON XXII.

PAGE

Mark vi. 31.—And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while : for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 211

SERMON XXIII.

Luke v. 29.—And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them 221

SERMON XXIV.

1 *Pet.* v. 6, 7.—Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time : casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you 233

SERMON XXV.

Mark vi. 31.—And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while 245

SERMON XXVI.

Ephes. v. 17.—Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is 256

SERMON XXVII.

John xi. 11.—Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep 266

SERMON XXVIII.

Luke xvi. 8.—The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light 275

SERMON XXIX.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| <i>Gen.</i> xxxiv. 30.—And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house | 289 |

SERMON XXX.

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Ephes.</i> vi. 13.—Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. . . . | 298 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| ADDRESS BEFORE CONFIRMATION | 309 |
|-------------------------------------|-----|

SERMON I.

HEB. XI. 1.—*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.*

EVERY one, who has ever heard so much as the very name of Christianity, knows how much the word faith has to do with it: he may not know what it means, still less may he know all that it means; but still he knows that it has a great deal to do with religion, that a great deal of stress has been laid upon it, and a great deal said and written for and against it. He knows too that it is a word of which he does not hear much, except as connected with religion: that it is not like honesty, honour, courage, wisdom, kindness, cruelty, &c.; that is, a thing which is continually brought forward in common life, which all seem to understand, and all in word, at least, to value. He knows, in short, that it is something peculiar to religion, and in an especial manner peculiar to the religion of Christ.

So in truth it is: it is among the most perfect proofs of God's wisdom, to those who can understand, that in his revelation to man He has taken hold in a manner, if I may so speak, of that one part of our nature which was lying most neglected, and yet in which the seed of our

highest perfection is alone to be found. Faith is indeed that which most raises us from a state of brute selfishness and brute ignorance, and leading us on gradually, according to our gradual growth, from one high object to another, ends by offering to the mind of the Christian the most perfect object of all, even God Himself, our Father, and Saviour, and Sanctifier. And again, as faith is so powerful and so excellent when once awakened, and steadily kept alive, so it is that part of our nature in which the effects of our corruption are seen most strongly. Infinitely different as are the causes which check and destroy it at different ages, at different stations, and in different characters, still all of us at every part of our lives must feel that it is in a manner our weak point ; and all of us have the greatest need to join in the prayer of the original disciples of Christ, and to say to Him as they did, " Lord, increase our faith."

But now comes the question, What is faith? And as an answer to it I have chosen the words of the text ; " It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." That is to say, it is that feeling or faculty within us, by which the future becomes to our minds greater than the present ; and what we do not see, more powerful to influence us than what we do see. But, perhaps, some few common instances will explain what I mean more fully.

I will take, first, one of the simplest and lowest. A child is told by his parents to be careful and tidy ; he is threatened with punishment if he is not so ; he is promised some little reward if he is. The parents are not present ; the punishment and the reward are not actually before the eyes of the child ; while the temptation is : that is to say, he feels that it is a trouble to put his things together, and that at the very moment when he sees something which he wishes to be doing immediately. Now, then, if he thinks more of the future reward and punishment than of the present trouble and pleasure ; if he cares more for his parents, whom he may not see for an hour or two, than for the plaything which lies before his eyes ; if he accordingly puts his things together, and is careful and tidy, then this child has, after his humble measure, acted by faith ; he has gained some experience of that principle which, if he is a follower of Jesus, must be the guide of his life till that hour when all earthly things shall pass away.

I have purposely begun with an instance of the humblest kind ; let us now ascend a step higher. A boy is told by his parents that over eating and drinking will make him ill ; it may be not immediately, but that he will in all probability feel the effects of it before he has gone on long. Here the evil threatened is not only more distant, but it is not absolutely certain.

The trial of faith then is somewhat greater : for the temptation here, as in all cases, is present and before his eyes : the evil of yielding to it is future, and he can only see it with his mind. Here too, if the future prevails over the present, the unseen over that which is seen, the boy has acted by faith, and in proportion as the faith had to look to a more distant object, so it was stronger and more advanced than that of the child.

We will proceed a little further still. A boy is told by his parents to exert himself in learning his lessons : he is told that habits of idleness will become stronger the longer he indulges them ; that much of his future prospects in life will depend on his own conduct now ; that the study which is now so irksome to him will in time, if steadily pursued, reward him by the pleasures of knowledge, which he will then find abundantly worth all the trouble it cost him to arrive at them. Here again the good thing promised is not only still more distant, but it is of a nature which the boy to whom it is offered cannot fully understand. In the other case he knew what it was to be sick ; he fully understood that it was painful and disagreeable ; but of the pleasures of knowledge, or the inconveniences of ignorance, he can have but a very faint and vague idea. If then, although the good thing promised him be not only distant, but is one which he cannot fully understand ; if be-

lieving what his parents tell him, he overcomes the present temptation of idleness, in the hope of a distant and indistinctly understood reward, here is an instance of faith yet stronger and of a fuller stature; and every one sees that the character is in a high degree ennobled and improved by acting under its influence.

I have been speaking hitherto of faith; yet I have spoken of it as quite distinct from Religion or Christianity. It is very true, that if we knew nothing of God, still there would be the same feeling of preferring the future and the unseen to the present, and to that which is seen; and that this feeling, wherever it existed, would raise and improve the mind. And it is true, also, I think, that God intends us to learn how we ought to feel towards Him, by feeling first so towards our parents: they are a child's first appointed objects of faith, and hope, and love. But the moment that we are told of God, we see at once that He is an object of faith, far more excellent than any other, and that it is when directed towards Him, that the feeling can be brought forward to its full perfection. I supposed that the commands given to the child in the three former instances, were *given by his parents*; that is to say, by persons whom he knew to be worthy of belief, because they loved him dearly, and wished his good, and understood how to take care of him

far better than he did himself. It is a very necessary part of faith that the thing which we believe be told us by some one whom we have reason for believing ;—some one whom we know to be, so far as we are concerned, good and wise. Now a child's parents are to him so good and so wise, that it becomes properly an act of faith in him to take their word ; yet still we know, and children very soon learn to know, that parents are very far from being quite good and quite wise : they may therefore hold out hopes and fears which it may not be quite safe to build upon. But the moment we are told of God,—so perfect in wisdom, so perfect in goodness, so perfect in power,—we find one on whose assurance we may rely with the most certain trust ; and whose commands will be as good and wise as the fulfilment of his threats and promises will be sure. Our heavenly Father is, in this respect, all that our earthly parents are or can be to us, and all in a degree infinitely more excellent. Again, I said it was a greater trial of faith when the good or the evil expected was distant, and still greater, when it was not only distant, but imperfectly understood. Now the good and evil which God promises and threatens to Christians is so distant, that it will only come after our earthly lives are over : it is so imperfectly understood, that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to

conceive, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him;—nor yet, I may add, the wrath which He has prepared for those who do not love Him. So, then, faith in God, in his promises and his threatenings, seems to be perfect in all the points required to perfect it: it rests on the word of Him who is all good, all wise, and all powerful; it points to objects so distant that faith must be strong and well matured, in order to reach to them; it encourages and terrifies, by blessings and miseries so far removed from our present conceptions, that the faith must be far more powerful which can overcome actual temptations by dwelling on objects, which our understandings are as unable to grasp fully, as our bodily eyes and ears to see and to hear them.

This, then, is religious faith;—but there is yet a peculiar species of religious faith, which is more excellent and more powerful than all the others, and which, therefore, is not unfrequently called in Scripture, in a particular manner, by the common name of faith. I am now speaking of Christian faith; that is, not only a faith in God, our heavenly Father, but a faith in God, as He has revealed Himself to us in the New Testament; that is, in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason why this Christian faith is so much more excellent than any other kind, even of religious faith, is because it shows us more of God's. perfections

than any other ; and from that view becomes even yet stronger, and more pure, and more self-abandoning. I know well enough, that here I am approaching ground on which, unhappily, I cannot, to all my hearers, make myself fully understood. Many there are, and ever will be, in every congregation, to whom the word of salvation, through the blood of Christ, will be as hard and as uninteresting a saying, as it was to those Jews who followed Christ by the sea of Galilee, because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, but who turned back and walked no more with Him, when He spoke of the bread of life ; and yet more when He told them, that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood. I know that all cannot receive the words of the kingdom of heaven, because their hearts and minds are so little heavenly. Of faith in our parents' promises we can all understand, however little we practise it ;—even religious faith, in its more general sense, is not wholly out of our reach : but when we come to Christian faith, so simple and so natural to those who have first believed their parents' word, and have early learnt from them to believe and love God's also, we find it hard and wholly unattractive to those who have never been in the habit of believing either. How can such understand the excellence of Christian faith, which shows to us God so pure, that He must punish the sinner,

and yet so loving to us, that He gave his only-begotten Son to save us from our sins! How can they, who are so vain of every little good thing they do, and who so quickly forget every thing that they do evil; how can they understand a faith which has learnt so much of God and of itself, as to feel that all its good deeds are less than nothing, when compared with an eternal reward—that its evil deeds are so many and so hateful to God, that it finds not in itself how to escape from the sentence of his Justice? In short, how can they, who live wholly by sight, who do not *practise* even the lower kinds of faith, how can they so much as understand the highest? Yet, as without the highest faith we cannot be saved,—as you, all of you, and I, too, are living either in and by this faith, or in the assured and daily increasing wrath of God,—as we have peace with Him through Jesus Christ, or have no peace at all, and shall have none for ever, and our state is only the more hopeless, for our being so fatally blind to it,—so I must strive to lay before you, in some future sermons, the nature and uses of Christian Faith; hoping and praying that the attempt may be blessed by the Spirit of God to your benefit, and that it may not be to me a double condemnation, if, while I speak of it to others, I have it not practically for my own soul's deliverance.

SERMON II.

1 JOHN V. 4, 5.—*This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

I SPOKE in my sermon last Sunday of Faith in its more general sense: first, of faith as exercised by a child towards his parents; and afterwards, of religious faith, according to that description of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is said, "that he who cometh to God, must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." I then proposed to speak more particularly of Christian faith, and to show how this was the most perfect kind of all, and most powerful to give us the victory over all temptations. And it is this part of the subject which I must now endeavour to lay before you as clearly as I am able.

We must remember how faith was described to be a preferring some future and unseen good to a present and visible one, on the authority of some one whom we had reason to think good and wise. And we must remember also, that religious faith consisted in preferring future to present good things, on the authority of God Himself; that is, of One who is perfectly wise

and good. That is to say, we may suppose a man influenced by religious faith to say thus to himself: "I know that the present temptation is very strong; but then I have the promise of God, who cannot lie, that to serve Him faithfully, will be better for me than anything else in the world; and trusting to his word, I will forego the present pleasure, in the hope of that future blessing which He promises." It is plain that this faith or trust in God rests upon our belief of his goodness, wisdom, and power, however we may have gained our knowledge of these attributes; and it will be readily seen, that in proportion as our impression of God's perfections is more lively, so will our readiness to trust to Him entirely be stronger, and more unhesitating. This is no more than we see at once to be the case in our human relations. It may be that a child who has never seen his father, may be very desirous to obey him, and to trust to his instructions, because he knows that he is his father, and has a general impression of his kindness and wisdom; but it is clear that he would obey him much more readily, and rely upon his counsels much more fully, if he had a close personal knowledge of him, and had seen and experienced the excellencies of his character in a variety of particular instances.

Christian faith, then, has this advantage over simple religious faith, in the more general sense

of the word, that having obtained clearer and fuller notions of God's perfections, it is rendered stronger and more triumphant over temptations. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Even they who do believe this, find the world sufficiently dangerous, and the victory sufficiently difficult; but they who have not this faith find the victory more than difficult—it is altogether impossible. And they who have it in word only, or in whom it only exercises its power occasionally, will, practically, derive no greater benefit from it than those who have it not at all.

Now Christian faith, or the faith that Jesus is the Son of God, gives us so much clearer and fuller notions of God, that it makes us know both Him and ourselves, and love Him, far better than we could do without it. We had a general notion, by mere religious faith, that God was a holy God, and that He must judge far differently of sin from the judgment that we are accustomed to pass on it. But Christian faith makes us say to ourselves, "I see now how very much God must abhor sin, since, without the precious blood of his own Son, there could be no remission for it." Again, natural religion tells us that God is merciful; but Christian faith makes us say, "How can I be thankful enough to the infinite goodness of God, since He has given his

only-begotten Son to die for me?" Again, natural religion teaches us to think humbly of ourselves, and to look to God for strength to help us. But the Christian says, "If the only-begotten Son of God has died for me, it is clear that my own deeds could do nothing for me in God's judgment; it is clear that they are too worthless to weigh a hair in the scale, when put with the infinite value of Christ's sacrifice. And if Christ has obtained for me, by his death and rising again, the gift of the Holy Ghost, it is clear that He that is with me is greater than he that is against me, and that I may struggle with confidence against my temptations, knowing that in that struggle the Eternal Spirit of God will aid me." Further, the very simplest notions of God tell us, that holy things and holy places must not be profaned by the mixture of evil. But the Christian thinks, "My body is a holy thing, for God has redeemed it; my heart is a holy place, for the Holy Ghost has made it his temple. Every evil, therefore, of thought, and word, and deed, profanes a thing set apart to God's special service; profanes a place where God continually dwells. Every lust, every evil and unkind passion, is, therefore, a sacrilege." And then, if he turns to the temptations of the world, and casts the eye of faith towards that future and unseen recompense, which is promised him, he bethinks

him at what price it was purchased for him, and by what infinite love it was given; he feels, on the one hand, how worthless must be his own efforts to earn that which only the blood of the Son of God could buy; yet, with that zealous hope he may labour, sure that God is mightily working in him, giving him an earnest will, and strengthening him to do steadily what he has willed sincerely.

This, then, is the faith that overcometh the world; for it is a faith that looks to an eternal reward, and which is founded on such a display of God's love and holiness, that the Christian may well say, "I know in whom I have believed." Conceive any one of us, old or young, having this faith, and do we not feel sure that it must overcome the world? Do we not feel sure that all temptations must be powerless against him who is heartily persuaded of what God has done, and will do for him, who looks forward to the kingdom of heaven, and knows and feels by whose blood it has been thrown open to him? Do we not see clearly, and do not our own hearts tell us, that if temptations are too strong for us, it is because our faith is weak? If the present pleasure beguiles us, is it not because the future blessing is one of which we do not feel quite sure? Is it not because the love of Christ, in dying for us, is rather a sound familiar to our ears, than a reality, thoroughly

impressed on our hearts and minds? Have you not, in fact, so felt it to be, even while I have been now addressing you? The sounds, the words which I have been using, are so familiar to your ears, that they seem uninteresting from their very triteness. Your attention would be ten times more aroused by the commonest story which I could tell you, about the commonest worldly interest; yet, while the words are thus so familiar, the reality of them is altogether strange to you. If your attention has followed what I have said, I know that in much of it I shall have been as one who beateth the air; that the love of God in Christ gives you really no distinct and lively idea: your hearts and minds do not take it in. Assuredly the faith which you find at once so uninteresting, and so hard to understand, cannot be the ruling principle of your lives: you cannot, in any sense, be walking by faith. And, therefore, I have thought that it might be well to say a few words in conclusion, as to the means of gaining this faith; to tell you how you may, with God's blessing, come to understand it and to love it, and to act upon it, just as naturally as we now act every day, from some motive of worldly pleasure or pain.

I dare say, that when I speak of the means of gaining this faith, you will know at once to what I am alluding; so impossible is it to say

what you do not know already ; as impossible, indeed, as it appears to be to make you feel it as well as know it. The means are principally three—reading the Scripture, prayer, and a partaking of the Lord's supper. You see what it is that is wanted ; namely, to make notions wholly remote from your common life take their place in your minds, as more powerful than the things of common life ;—to make the future and the unseen prevail over what you see and hear now around you. I know, indeed, of one thing which would effect this in an instant. Let any of you be taken dangerously ill, let his prospects of earthly life be rendered less than uncertain, then he would soon think far more of the unseen world than of the world now around us. And it is certain, or at least all but certain, that some of you who now hear me will be thus reminded of another world—out of the number here assembled, it is certain that some will be cut off before they reach their prime. No one who has left school ten years, will find that all who were his companions there are still alive : therefore, although taking you each separately, the probabilities are, that you will live on to the natural age of man ; yet, taking you altogether, it is more than a probability that you will not. But this is always one of those cases in which every one trusts that the chances will be in his own favour ;

and this innate gambling spirit of human nature it is mostly vain to argue with. Your business is to gain for yourselves, with no risk, but to your infinite and certain profit, that lively sense of unseen things, which sickness and sudden death may bring to you, when too late to save you. When I speak of Christ's love to you, those who know little of the New Testament feel that the words are to them hardly more than an empty sound: they have no distinct impression of what Christ was and is. But this impression may be gained by reading about Him; it was one great end of his becoming man, and of his words and actions being so fully recorded, that we should be able to bring Him before our minds as a real and living friend, that his character, his feelings—I had well-nigh said his very person and manner—might be brought distinctly and vividly before us. And what a picture the history of Christ's life and death, as given in the Gospels, does really offer to us! It cannot be said that it is hard or uninteresting; on the contrary, the story of his betrayal and crucifixion, in particular, is so full of the deepest interest, that I am sure if it were not so connected with thoughts of God, from which our inborn sense of sin makes us instinctively shrink, it would be read for the mere pleasure of the story. So, again, with the account of the raising of Lazarus, and of many other of our

Lord's miracles ; and the same may be said of the perfect beauty of many of his parables and other discourses. By reading these often, we get clear and lively notions of our Saviour's character ; we learn unavoidably to love it. Then it is, I think, that the facts of his resurrection and ascension, and of his divine nature, come upon us with such exceeding comfort. If we have become deeply interested in any other character of ancient days, yet we feel, that after all, it is an interest about a thing that is past ;—the virtues which we admire, the character which we love, have no longer any existence with respect to ourselves. In whatever state the dead are reserved till the day of the general resurrection, the veil is purposely drawn over their condition, that we might not seek to hold too close communion with them. But when, from a study of Christ's life in the flesh, we have learnt to admire and to love Him, then, how delightful is the recollection, that over Him death has had no power—that at this very moment He lives in the same human nature, the very self-same Jesus, in all tenderness, in all watchful care of his disciples, in all human affections and divine excellences, as when He parted from his disciples at Bethany, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. He was dead, but He liveth for evermore, and the Son of man is sitting at the right hand of God till He

shall come to earth once more to complete the number of his redeemed. Say not, then, nor think, nor feel, that Christ *was* merciful, that He *was* all kindness and all wisdom, that He *did* many mighty works, and had the Spirit of his Father given Him without measure; but say,—and you will say truly,—and think, and feel, that He *is* merciful, that He *is* all kindness and all wisdom, that He *does* mighty works every day,—for all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth:—that He *has* the Spirit of his Father, and daily distributes of it to his disciples, that so we may all receive of his fulness. These are the feelings which we may gain from the New Testament. Faith will come by *reading*, as of old time it came by *hearing*; and when we have thus become familiar with Christ, have learned to love Him, and to know that He not only *was*, but *is now*, a living object of our love, the prospect of being with Him for ever will not seem like a vague promise of we know not what, but a real substantial pleasure, which we would not forfeit for all that the world can offer.

But I have been led away by my subject, and find that there is not time to pursue it further: I must reserve the other two means of acquiring Christian faith for consideration in another sermon. Only may God grant, that what I have hitherto said, may lead some of

you, at least, to acquire a greater familiarity with the words and deeds of Christ; that your own experience might tell you whether I have over-valued the advantages of knowing them and loving them.

SERMON III.

JOHN VI. 58.—*This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

I MENTIONED in my last sermon, that there were three ordinary means of acquiring that faith which is so necessary to us, and of which we all of us have too little a portion. These three means were, reading the Scriptures, prayer, and the partaking of the Lord's supper. Of the first of these I spoke last Sunday; I mentioned how, by reading the story of Christ's life and death in particular, we should bring the thought of Him home to our minds as something of a reality; and, when we had learnt to fancy and to love Him as He was on earth, that then it was a comfort to think, that such as He had been on earth, such He now is at the right hand of God, with almighty power and infinite love; and I earnestly recommended the making ourselves familiar with the words and deeds of Christ, as a first and most important step towards believing in Him and loving Him. Still it is but too certain, by every day's experience, that the reading of the Scriptures of itself is not sufficient; that although faith may come at

first by reading, yet it needs something else to sustain it; in short, that it is very possible to know the Scriptures thoroughly, and yet not to have that faith which overcometh the world. Nay, I may go further: it is possible not only to know the Scriptures, but heartily to admire them; not only to be familiar with Christ's words and actions, but to feel a great delight in and love for them; and yet still not to have that saving, that victorious faith, of which St. John speaks in the words of my last Sunday's text. We cannot doubt Peter's familiar knowledge of his Lord, nor yet his lively recollection of his words, nor his warm affection for his person: yet, with all this, what is it that Christ said to him just before He was betrayed to be crucified?—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." What faith he had already was not sufficient to withstand the assaults of his enemy; he was overcome, even to the denying of his Lord; yet his faith, though weak, though far from overcoming the world, still, through Christ's prayer, was upheld from failing utterly. He recovered from his fall, and received a diviner strength; and when converted, he did indeed strengthen his brethren; and not only his brethren who then were, but

by his epistles, preserved for our instruction, he strengthens us also, and will continue to strengthen our children after us, even unto the end of the world.

Let us take then ourselves, (and to how many in the world is the case applicable,) as being such as Peter was when our Lord said these words to him. I do not mean to suppose our love to Christ to be half so warm as his was; much rather, I believe, may we sympathize with the wish of one of the best and wisest men of the fifteenth century, (Wessel of Groningen,) "that we had so much love to Christ in these quiet times as Peter had, even when he cursed and swore, and denied his Master." But I mean the likeness to extend thus far; that we, like Peter, may have become familiar with our Lord's words and life, and may really have conceived a sincere admiration and love for them. Then it is that we need Christ's prayer for us, that our faith fail not; then it is that Satan will sift us as wheat, will do with us whatever he will, unless Christ's prayer join with our prayer, and Christ's Spirit enter into our spirits, to become our bread of life.

"This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." Easy, most easy, is it to admire and love what is beautiful, and wise, and pure, and

holy ; nay, it is even unnatural and monstrous not to admire it. But there is something more wanted than this, before we shall copy as well as admire ; and in this is the great point of all. It is not enough that we love the character of Christ : who can help loving it ? It must be something of a closer and more personal feeling, if I may so speak, that will make Him become to us the bread of life ; and this feeling will only be gained by prayer. By prayer we speak to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and we speak to Him as needing his help and mercy. By prayer we express our sense of the reality of what we have read in the Scriptures ; we say, in fact, " Give to me, Lord, my own particular portion in the blessings which the Scripture speaks of. I love what I read of Christ ; but I am so unlike Him, that He cannot love me. I love his character ; but other feelings often come in much stronger than this love, so that I cannot be said to live in the love of Him. What I want, thou, Lord, seest, and thou wilt give it me also ; for though I have, as yet, no personal experience in these matters, yet I know that the Scripture says we shall be heard if we pray to thee, and that thou wilt give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it." It is an awful moment, a turning point often in our character for all eternity, when we first begin, in some such manner as this, to enter into a real communion

with God ; when our prayers first become,—I do not say sincere, for I should be very sorry to think that they had not been, in many cases, sincere, even from earliest childhood,—but when they first proceed out of an awakened heart which feels more deeply what itself is, and what is God. It is astonishing how this sort of earnest prayer opens our eyes daily more and more, and strengthens our faith. A natural part of such prayer is confession: we cannot but truly feel our unworthiness when we bring the most high and holy God present, in a manner, before us. We know then—we cannot help knowing—that we are naked. This calls up before our minds our particular and besetting sins; those disguises of our real character, which self-love is so apt to throw over it, are all torn to pieces then; we see ourselves nearly in the same light as a fair enemy would see us. And this alone, what a mighty point is it to gain! How many of us (and this is the truer, in proportion as we are younger) are kept from day to day, without ever seeing ourselves truly as we are! We think of our faults, only to deny or to excuse them; we dwell with pleasure on our good points, and the rest we are glad to pass over. But in prayer, and when kneeling, really with a sincere heart, before Him to whom all hearts are open, his Spirit, if I may so speak, becomes our own: and we are all open and

manifest before our own eyes, as before his. Then we turn to Him to save us from this evil, which we have discovered: "Lord, forgive me; Lord, help me to strive against my selfishness, my indolence, my pride, my unkindness, my carelessness, my love of pleasure, my lust, my covetousness, my ungodliness!"

Each soul who now hears me, if he could but put himself for an instant into his state when he is sincerely praying, could tell at once,—his heart, whilst I have been naming these several sins, would answer at once to the touch of that or those particular ones to which he is himself in bondage, "Lord, help me to strive against it; for Jesus Christ's sake, save me from it!" They are but a few words; but how wholesome to the soul when said, as they are said in such prayer, with earnest sincerity! Our attention is drawn just to those very parts in ourselves which most need it: at every prayer the attention is renewed. We cannot help thinking, when we ask God in the evening to strengthen us against such and such a sin, whether we have committed it since we uttered the same prayer in the morning. If we have not, we are encouraged; if we have, we are justly ashamed; and our prayer is the more earnest, that the next day we may be more watchful. Say that we fall again, (for infinite is our frailty,) that our sense of shame is deeper, our fear for the future

just so great as to give the enemy of our souls an opportunity of turning it into desperate carelessness: "It is a vain labour to try to mend." Then our familiarity with the Scripture comes in time to tell us, "that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;" and to encourage us to renewed efforts by assuring us, "that he who cometh to Christ, Christ will in no wise cast out."

The same knowledge of the Scripture brings rapidly before our mind all the promises which we most need. It reminds us that we must be earnest in prayer, and not faint; that the kingdom of God is like the seed, which grew up in its appointed season, though it showed no signs of life at once; that he who shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. All these, and many other such texts, we now lay hold of with a personal interest. We now feel their value. The words of Christ, in this our daily struggle with our sins, are now, indeed, becoming to us our bread of life. While I repeat the words, those who have attended to what I have been saying, will feel their true import; they will feel that, in such circumstances, they would go to Christ's life and words, and find in them a real effectual support to their souls, just as they have found the cheering and strengthening effect of food to their bodies, when engaged in any

great and fatiguing exercise of body or mind.— That, amidst these prayers, thus repeated, a wonderful change is effected within us; that our dispositions are greatly softened and sweetened; that our views of life and death become different; our interest in earthly things less engrossing; our selfishness generally less intense; all this is a matter of actual experience; of most blessed experience to those who can confirm it from within themselves: but of recorded experience also in the lives of Christians, such as we may either have known them ourselves, or may have read of them. And that this change, so real and so visible, is the work of the Holy Spirit of God,—of the manner of which we can see and know nothing, but whose effects both we and all the world can witness,—this we learn from the Scriptures; and it forms one of the great and most consoling truths of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Unquestionably, where this change is wrought, faith overcometh the world. The good things which God has prepared for them that love Him; his love to us in Christ Jesus; the abiding influence of his Spirit: all these are things which our prayers have made quite familiar, not to our ears only, but also to our hearts: they are things which have become the great interest of our lives, and we live in the daily consciousness of their reality.

But what if these blessed effects do not follow;—what if our faith is still weak, and the world is not overcome;—that is, if the temptations of the world are still too much for us, and earthly hopes, and fears, and affections, still reign within our bosoms with far greater sway than the love of God! What shall we say to this? Is God's promise not sure? Is our labour all in vain? Or is it an empty dream that the Holy Spirit of God will ever deign to abide with the corrupt spirit of man? Shall we be careless or desperate, or rush to that most deadly snare of all, and say that we are fated to be as we are, and we cannot help it? All these are questions which arise from not enough bracing our minds to the belief of this great truth, that our struggle with evil must last to the very latest hour of our continuance in the body. Who told us that our victory would be won with less than half a life's labour; that our first efforts would be successful; and that we should be partakers of the rest that remaineth for the people of God, ere yet the sun had begun to slope from his meridian—ere the first shades of evening had arisen around us? We must learn another and a harder lesson, or else indeed we shall lose the victory for ever. Is our faith still weak;—let us take heed that our prayers have not been less frequent or less zealous. Is the world still too much for us;—let

us take heed that we have not thrown away some portion of our defence ; that we have not been imprudent, to say the least of it ; that we have not used the world even so as to abuse it ; that we have not let the weeds and the thorns of earthly riches, pleasures, and honours, grow too unchecked and rankly. Let us measure our years, if we are young or in the vigour of manhood, at once for encouragement and for warning : if we see how little progress we have hitherto made, let us take heed lest we should feel the same when all our threescore years and ten are over ; for the despair that would be most sinful now, will be too just and too certain then. And let us know, that if we indulge the spirit of carelessness now, this despair will come, —our years will pass away unnoted, till gone for ever. But if our hearts are only unreasonably fearful, if we expected to conquer sin with too little effort, think of the portion of our lives that yet remains, think to what precious purposes it may be applied, and that he were but a foolish and faint-hearted traveller who expected to reach the end of his journey before half his day was over.

SERMON IV.

ACTS II. 42.—*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

IN speaking of Christian faith, I mentioned that there were three principal means of acquiring it: namely, reading the Scriptures, prayer, and a partaking of the Lord's supper. I have spoken of the two first of these, and I now propose to speak of the third; to which I may the better ask for your attention, as the communion is so soon to be here administered. Would that you might feel that communion to be as great a blessing as it really is; that you might, like the first Christians spoken of in the text, continue "stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

"The breaking of bread," here spoken of, was the Lord's supper, which is often mentioned under this name in different parts of the New Testament. It appears to have been celebrated as a real supper, as a sort of Christian feast; which we may perceive from St. Paul's language to the Corinthians, where he charges them with profaning it, by not only making it like a common feast, but dishonouring it by actual riot and

intemperance, such as would be sinful at even the commonest feast. But it is clear from the very faults into which the early Christians fell with respect to the Lord's supper, that they were in the habit of celebrating it very often; and though in some cases, as at Corinth, it was celebrated very unworthily, yet we must not suppose that this was so always. Those Philippians and Thessalonians, of whom St. Paul speaks so highly, were likely to receive the communion of the Lord's supper not less often than the Corinthians; but in a very different manner, and with very different effects. To them, as to the first disciples at Jerusalem, mentioned in my text, it was a true remembrance of Christ's death; the bread which they brake, the cup which they drank, were a true partaking of Christ's body and blood. To them, in short, the communion was a powerful means of grace, and helped, under God's blessing, to increase their faith.

May it be so to us also; and it will be, if the fault is not our own. It will be a *means of grace*: I beg attention to the words; for this is a point very necessary to be understood, in order to avoid a superstition as foolish as it is mischievous. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing:" that is, it is not the consecrated bread and wine that have any virtue in themselves, for that would be to make them like

a charm ; but it is the state of mind, which the preparation for and partaking in this ordinance implies, and is so well fitted to produce, which is so highly to be desired, and which tends to strengthen and confirm our faith. When, therefore, persons who never or very seldom receive the communion in health, are anxious to partake of it before they die, I am afraid that this desire is very often a mere deceiving superstition. They do not go to it as a means of grace ; but as a means of gaining them pardon without grace,—as a means by which they may be saved without having in their lives heartily turned to God. And this is to make the communion a gross superstition ; it is, in fact, to regard it as if it were a charm. In life and health it will assuredly make us better, if we habitually attend it ; but who will dare to say that it can make us better on our death-beds, when we have neither the time nor the power of mind to complete so mighty a work as that of repentance, or a change of heart and desires from evil to good ? The rain and the sunshine are the appointed means by which the fruits of the earth are ripened ; but, in order to do their work, they must be sent in their proper season. They will make the seed spring up, they will encourage its growth, and ripen it for the harvest ; but of what use are they where the seed has never been sown at all, or where the soil

has been so light or so foul that it has never been able to spring up, or to reach its full growth? Even so, the communion of the Lord's supper is as useless as the rain and sunshine upon the desert or the sea, where there are no good principles within us which it may strengthen and increase, or where the time is so short that its power can never sufficiently develop itself.

But this is not the case with you: with you it is yet the spring time, not yet too late for the rain and warmth of heaven to produce on the seed their full effect. You have yet the opportunity of using the means of grace to your great benefit, if you will but choose to avail yourselves of them. Begin now the habit of "continuing stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Begin it, if it be still to be begun: go on with it, if you have been happy enough to have already entered upon it. Do I call the hard and the careless among you to come next Sunday to the Lord's table, and there with hearts at once ungodly and superstitious, at once unbelieving and foolishly believing, to receive a morsel of bread and a few drops of wine, which to them would be far less profitable than the commonest food on the commonest occasion of daily life? God forbid! It were a deceit of the most cruel kind to call such persons: it were most wicked to encourage

them to receive as wholesome and strengthening food what to them would be a fatal poison. For, undoubtedly, the heart is not improved, but injured, by acts of superstition; the holiest things cannot be trifled with, but are a savour of death unto death, if they are not a savour of life unto life. And, therefore, I have not lately urged any of you in private to go to the communion, lest it might be possible that you should go out of human respects, rather than from a real desire to benefit yourselves. In fact, one feels on this point a great difficulty; one knows not how to urge you personally and separately to come, nor how to leave everything unsaid, as if it mattered not in our estimate whether you came or no. But when I saw the comparatively small number that did attend the last time when the sacrament was administered, I felt sure that we ought not to be silent altogether, nor rest contented with such a state of things, without trying at least to mend it. I wished that another opportunity might be offered you, that if it were from accident in a manner that so many of you had then turned away from the Lord's table, and if since that time any circumstances had led your minds to a better state, that the means of grace might be placed within your reach at an early period, in order to confirm the good impression. God alone can tell, when, and from what seemingly slight causes,

feelings of repentance and faith may arise within us : and, therefore, that communion which is the best support of weakness, the best encouragement to our first endeavours after goodness, ought not to be long together withheld from your reach. It may be, that an impression which otherwise might have been soon worn out may be thus fixed for ever : it may be, that the spiritual food thus offered at the very hour of need, may be indeed the bread of life. I call then, not upon the hard and utterly careless, but upon those, whoever and how many soever they are, who have at any rate received the good seed ; who have sometimes thought of their souls ; who have if it be no more than felt one honest wish that they had a share in Christ's redemption. Let that one wish be encouraged ; and let him who has felt it resolve to come to the supper of Christ, that he may feel it again and for ever. And I earnestly call upon all those who hear me, into whose hearts such thoughts have entered, to come without regard to any such consideration as the place which they happen to hold in school. Entirely separate as the communion here is from all school regulations, and earnestly as we endeavour to abstain from any mere human and personal influence to persuade you to come, I have the more right to entreat you in your turn not to let such an idle reason as that of being in a

lower part of the school prevent you from getting for your souls the help which they need. Nay, I would even say, what the Church fully authorizes me in saying, let not your not having been confirmed restrain you; above all, take care that you do not make it an hypocritical excuse for putting off a little longer the duty of serious thought and self-examination. The Church says, that no one shall come to the communion until he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed. And now, in these days, when the opportunities of confirmation occur so seldom, and when, in the case of those who go early abroad, years may pass before they can receive it, we cannot be justified in willingly depriving ourselves of a great means of grace, on such a reason as this. But we see many, far too many, who have been confirmed, and who have no such excuse to plead, still turning away, time after time, from the communion that is offered to them. I would not, and do not, reckon all these among the hard and utterly careless; that, in deed, were not less unreasonable, than it would be shocking, to be obliged so to reckon them: but I do tell them that they are tempting God to make them hard and careless; that they are playing with their own destruction; and that it is no light thing whether good thoughts are habitually neglected or stifled, or whether they be entertained and carefully improved. It is no

light thing, that the impressions which you may sometimes receive in this place should vanish almost as soon as you go out of its doors. You may not be hard now,—none of you, I trust, are so; but you will assuredly soon become so, if you go on neglecting the means of becoming otherwise. Of all deadly errors, I know of none so widely mischievous as that notion that we can repent at any time; that it is always in our power to be good. Undoubtedly we can always, with God's blessing, repent if we *will*; but it is that very will to repent which we are surely destroying by a continual perseverance in unholiness. The appetite for good is as surely destroyed by long-continued habits of evil, as the appetite for our wholesome bodily food by a long continuance of bodily excesses.

Once more then I entreat all those who have had any serious thoughts and wishes to be good, to resolve to seize the means of grace now offered. Pray that as Christ invites you to partake in the outward signs of his redemption, so you may be made one with Him in heart and in spirit, and may be partakers of his redemption indeed. Remember that "as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show the Lord's death till he come." It brings to our minds the night just before Christ was betrayed, when He was assembled with his disciples, and holding to them that language of counsel and

of comfort which has been recorded by St. John from the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapters of his Gospel, for our everlasting benefit. While we read those words, we feel as if, had we been with Christ's first disciples at that last supper, we could have resigned our whole souls without reserve into the care of our gracious Saviour. "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head;"—every affection, every desire, every hope and thought of our nature, let them be wholly thine, and purified by thy blessed Spirit. We feel as if indeed we could lay down our lives for his sake; we feel that we do then believe. But, my brethren, it is no vain superstition, it is no extravagant fancy, but the very simple truth, that if we, with contrite and humble hearts, do meet together at that holy table, there indeed is Christ in the midst of us; there is his Spirit shedding down upon us the peace that passeth all understanding, and enkindling within us a strength of holy resolutions, and an entireness of resignation to the will of God, such as we might have felt at that last supper, when our Lord was yet amongst us in the body. Not manifest, indeed, to the world, not manifest to any who approach his table with careless hearts; Judas sat with Him, and saw Him with his bodily eyes, and ate of the bread and drank of the cup; but Christ's Spirit was not manifest to him; and it is the Spirit alone that

quickeneth. Even so his bodily presence would profit us nothing: his Spirit is as truly with his faithful disciples now, when they eat and drink the bread and the wine in remembrance of Him, as it was with his eleven faithful disciples, whom He then pronounced to be clean. Not clean, indeed, from all imperfection, not saved from all future sin and error, nor must we expect to be so; but strengthened to become better than they had been; not provided with an entire security against evil, but gifted with a more willing heart, and a firmer faith, to strive against it.

SERMON V.

[PREACHED ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.]

1 COR. XIII. 11.—*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

THESE words contain the reason why so many of the sermons delivered from the pulpit in our own times, and our own country, produce so little effect upon their hearers. They are the address of a man who speaks and thinks in one way, to persons who speak and think in another. It is only by experience that we find what strong barriers are raised by age, by education, by manners of living, between one class of men and another; so that what are the most natural and familiar thoughts to one set of persons, are to another strange and unnatural, and quite above their understanding. But the words of the apostle, although they will suit a great many other cases, are more particularly suited to ours, who are now here assembled: "When I was a child, I thought, spake, and understood as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." And so it is daily found to be: we not only put them away, but forget

them ; insomuch that it is sometimes as hard for a man to put himself again into the place of a boy, and to remember what he once was, as it is for a boy to imagine what he will be when he becomes a man, of which he has hitherto had no experience at all. Our Lord Himself seems, in one place, to speak of this particular difficulty which his ministers would meet with ; the difficulty of making themselves understood by their hearers. “ Every scribe,” He says, “ who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old :” that is, as the people whom he will speak to are so different, he must be furnished with something to say to all of them ; with things new and old ; with things plain and things learned ; with things solemn and things familiar ; with things of heaven and things of earth. However good what he says may be of itself, it is worth nothing for practice, if it be not also suited to the particular understandings and feelings of those he is speaking to. It is not enough to speak of sin in general, and holiness in general ; of God and Christ, of death and judgment. Something more clear and distinct is wanted ; or else we do but fill the ears of our hearers with empty words, rather than bring home to their minds any truths that will do them good. You know very well that your faults are not

those which you read of most in books; for books are written by men, and, in general, are intended to be read by men: they speak, therefore, mostly of the sins and temptations of manhood,—of covetousness, ambition, injustice, pride, and other older vices,—with which you feel that you have as yet but small concern. Besides, the pulpit is a solemn and sacred place; whereas the matters with which you are daily engaged are so common and so humble, that it seems like a want of reverence to speak of them in a sermon plainly by their names. And yet, if we do not speak of them plainly by their names, half of what we say will be lost in the air. I purpose, then, with God's help, now, and, perhaps, at some future times also, during this season of Lent which is now begun, to say something to you all about your own particular state and dangers; nor shall I care how plain and familiar is the language I use, as it is my wish to speak in such a manner that the youngest boy amongst you may understand, if he chooses to listen and to attend.

It is now a little more than a week ago, since there was read in this chapel the story of Adam eating the forbidden fruit, and being on that account driven out of paradise, and made liable to death. This story tells us how the first man that ever lived became a sinner; and we know, if we look into our own hearts with any care

and sincerity, that we shall find enough that is sinful in ourselves. That this is so generally,—that bad, if left to itself, is too strong for good, and that the greatest number are apt to follow the bad rather than the good,—men learn every year of their lives more fully, by their experience of the world around them ; but you, too, have had some experience of it already. Several of you are only just come to this place ; some of you were never at any school at all till you came here. Some of you, at least, and I hope very many, have had the blessing of good parents at home ; you have been taught to hear of God, and of Christ ; to say your prayers, and to remember that wherever you are, and whatever you are doing, God ever sees you. You have seen in your own house nothing base, nothing cruel, nothing ill-natured, and, especially, nothing false. You thought a lie was one of the most hateful things in the world ; and that to give up to your brothers and sisters, and to please your parents, was a great deal better than to be always quarrelling and envying, and to think of pleasing no one but yourselves. I hope and believe that many of you before you came to school were thus taught, and that the teaching was not in vain ; that you not only heard of what was good, but, on the whole, practised it. But how is it with you now ? I am afraid I dare not ask those who have been here so much

as one half year or more: but even if I were to ask those who have not yet been here so much as one month, what sort of an answer could you give, if you answered truly? Do you think of God *now*? Do you remember that He ever, and in every place, sees what you are doing? Do you say your prayers to Him? Do you still think that lying, and all those shuffling dishonest excuses, which are as bad as lying, are base, and contemptible, and wicked?—or have you heard these things so often from others, even if you yourselves have not been guilty of them, that you think there cannot be any great harm in them? Do you still love to be kind to your companions, never teasing or ill-treating them, and never being ill-natured and out of temper with them?—or have you already been accustomed to the devilish pleasure of giving pain to others; and, whilst you are yourselves teased and ill-used by some who are stronger than you, do you repeat the very same conduct to those who are weaker than you? Are you still anxious to please your parents; and, in saying your lessons, do you still retain the natural thought of a well-bred and noble disposition, that you would like to say to them as well as you can, and to please those who teach you?—or have you already learnt the first lesson in the devil's school, to laugh at what is good, and generous, and high-principled, and to be ashamed of doing your

duty? Now if you have been wholly or in part corrupted in these points, within one short month, so that the good learnt in ten or twelve years has been overthrown in less than thirty days;—and if this has happened not to one or two only, who might happen to be weak, and easily led into evil, but, more or less, to all of you, and, in a greater degree, generally speaking, to those who have been here for a longer period;—if, in short, you all find that you would be afraid to speak and act just as you ought to do, because you would be laughed at and disliked if you did;—then you have already had some experience of the truth of what the Bible tells us, that man's nature is corrupt and bad; and you can understand somewhat of the meaning of those texts which speak of the world as being opposed to God, and that its friendship is enmity with God. It shows you plainly, how strong must be our evil dispositions, when you see them, in so short a time, getting the better of those that have had ten or twelve years to ripen; it shows you, too, how much the world is opposed to God; that is, the opinions and practices of a number of persons, living together in one society,—because you see a number of boys, who, while living at home, or by themselves, might go on very well, and think and act very rightly, yet, as soon as they mix with one another, and from one large body, the opinions and

influence of that body shall be bad. Every boy brings some good with him, at least, from home, as well as some evil; and yet you see how very much more catching the evil is than the good, or else you would make one another better by mixing together: and if any single boy did anything wrong, it would be condemned by the general opinion of all the school, just as some wrong things, such as stealing money, for example, are condemned at present. You have learnt, then, or, at least, you have had the experience, and may have learnt, if you chose, how easily you are tempted to do wrong, and how apt the world is to tempt you: for, as I said before, the society in which we live is the world; and, therefore, school is the world to you, just as our town and neighbourhood and acquaintance, and all those who hear or know any thing about us, are the world to each of us in after life. And if you find, and sometimes, perhaps, feel sorry within yourselves, that it is so hard to be good; that you are so easily tempted to evil, and that the world about you is so apt to tempt you;—and yet, although you are thus sorry not to be better, you still are, in fact, no better;—then you are under what St. Paul calls the service and bondage of sin; that is, your lives are sinful, whether you like it or no; and, being sinful, lead you to dislike God, and to fear Him, without the fear doing you any good, and thus

make you liable to his heavy judgments. And it was a man in this state whom St. Paul makes justly to cry out, from a strong feeling of his misery, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

SERMON VI.

JOHN III. 12.—*If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

IN what I said to you on Wednesday from this place, I tried to bring clearly before your minds the meaning of those expressions which you will meet with in the Bible, and in other religious books,—that our nature is corrupt, and that we are all inclined to sin much more than to goodness. I tried to show you how you had already had experience of this, by finding how much easier it is to lose good habits than to gain them; to unlearn your duty than to learn it. I said, too, that you ought not at all to content yourselves with merely being sorry for not being better; but that you should recollect how St. Paul speaks of such a state as being a bondage, as being a wretched captivity, in which sin had bound him fast to his destruction, and would have kept him a prisoner for ever, in spite of all his wishing, now and then, that he were better, had he not been delivered through Jesus Christ. And I said, in conclusion, that if you could bring yourselves really

to feel this, then you were ripe for the great message of God which is called the Gospel; namely, the message in which He tells us that He has sent his Son into the world, that the world through Him might be saved. I said, that you were ripe for the great message of God, if you could bring yourselves really to feel this; but I know, full well, how much there is in this *if*; no less, indeed, to speak shortly, than the whole work of your salvation. To say, 'If you can bring yourselves really to feel your sin and danger,' is to say, 'If your hearts can be changed, by the Spirit of God, from stony, or shallow, or choked up with weeds and briers, to that soft, and strong, and clean soil, in which the seed of eternal life will spring up, and bring forth fruit an hundred-fold.' Nothing, indeed, can be more easy than to tell you of the salvation offered by Christ Jesus;—that He died for us, and rose again; and that, having overcome the sharpness of death, He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. I could tell you this as you have often heard it before; and the words would seem so old and familiar to your ears, that you could hardly fix your attention on them; while the thing itself would be so strange and foreign to all your feelings and notions, that you would not bring it home to your hearts and lives. Our Lord had been speaking to Nicodemus about his

sinful nature, and the necessity of its being changed; and even then Nicodemus did not enter into his meaning. Much less, then, could he enter into the great doctrine of salvation through Christ; he could not attend to what was said of the means of curing him, if he did not feel that he was sick. And, therefore, Christ well said to him, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

This, then, is the difficulty—how to make you, particularly the youngest among you, understand and enter into the truths of the Gospel. It is not that they are, properly speaking, hard to be understood; it is not like some hard matter of science, or some very difficult passage in a book, which you really are not old enough to understand, if you were to try ever so earnestly. The words in which religious truths are taught are as plain to you as to me. You know what is meant by death, and heaven, and hell, and repentance, and salvation, when you hear them spoken of: but the truth is, you do not care to think about them, because you have no interest about them. Generally speaking, we can understand and do well what we are fond of; however dull we may be about things that we dislike. You know how common it is to see a boy very dull about his lessons, yet very quick

and active in other things. Now he is dull about his lessons, because he does not like them ; because his mind is, as it were, asleep to them, and wakes up for things which he likes better. Real dulness of understanding shows itself in a very different way, and is, in comparison, very uncommon. If a boy is heavy and slow at all times,—dull at his plays as well as at his work, unable to amuse himself, and seeming to enjoy nothing but the lowest pleasures of all, eating, drinking, and sleeping,—then, indeed, we may say that the fault is, in a great measure, in his understanding—that he wants the power as well as the will. But, in the things of religion, it is the will that we all want, and not the power ; it is the appetite for our spiritual food, and nothing else, that is required ; it is our hearts that are sick and weak, rather than our understandings. And what is it by which we can make them strong ? What is it, indeed, and who can give it us ? No friend, no teacher, no minister of the Gospel ; no parent, however watchful, however tenderly affectionate. No man can deliver his brother, no friend his friend, no parent his child. All that the utmost care and kindness of man, or even of angel, could do in our behalf, is to point out the spring of the water of life : but to drink it depends upon yourselves only : and to desire to drink it

depends on the gift of the Spirit of God. If we are sick and weak, and our appetite for our food is gone, it is of no use to tell us to eat, or to put food before us : we must first get the appetite, and then we shall eat naturally and healthfully. And we know that there are means by which our appetite, when lost, may be regained. If we are sick and weak, it does not follow that we shall never be well and strong, if we use those means which common sense, and the experience of others, have told us to be useful. So also there are means by which the appetite of our souls may be recovered; there is a way by which they may become well and strong : and common sense, and the experience of all good men, and the word of God Himself, has declared to us what these means are. You all know that I speak of the habit of prayer; you want the will to come to Christ; you want to love good more strongly than you now love it; you want to love it so much as never to love any sin better. But you want what neither others nor yourselves, by yourselves, can give you. "No man can come unto God, unless God will draw him." You may say, 'Perhaps He will not draw me; and, therefore, I never shall be able to come to Him.' Nay, but hear his own promise, as it was read to you this very morning in this place :—"No father will give his son a stone when he asks for

bread ; and if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children,"—if you know, by experience, how kind are your earthly parents, how much they would give up for your good, how carefully they would do all in their power to benefit you,—“how much more shall your Father that is in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Be assured that no request which you can make to the kindest of earthly fathers will ever be so sure to be readily granted as the request which you make to your heavenly Father, that He will teach you to love Him. Pray to Him constantly for his help to open your eyes and soften your hearts ; and be sure that such prayers will not be in vain. Pray to Him to show you what he thinks of the evil that you are every day committing, and to make you think of it in the same manner ; and, depend upon it, that you will judge of it, ere long, very differently from what you now do. And this is in your own power. You can, if you choose, bend your knees, and utter words to God ; you can speak to Him in your hearts at certain seasons, whether you have opportunity to bend your knees or no. You can make a point of so speaking to Him every day ; of forcing yourselves to do it, if you cannot do it willingly ; and then, if you go on in this way, merely resolving and

practising to speak to God,—I care not in how few words, so that they are the words of your own hearts,—asking Him to be merciful to you, and to make you his own true children,—be assured that the will and the love of his service will very soon be given to your prayers, and you will be brought, by the Holy Spirit, to know and to love the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

SERMON VII.

2 KINGS II. 24.—*There came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*

I SAID, some time since, that as the Bible was written chiefly for grown-up persons, and the faults of grown-up persons are different from those of boys, so many things that are said in the Bible may seem not directly to concern you. And, in particular, what is difficult for all to form to themselves any full notion of, is, in the case of the young, still harder to enter into fully; I mean, the great consequence of what we do;—the very great rewards that will follow it, if good; and the equally great punishments which it will bring upon us, if bad. This, I say, is hard for every one to conceive; and it is well said, that the very first temptation ever offered to men, took advantage of this common feeling: “The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.” But it is still harder for you to fancy that your conduct can be either so immensely rewarded, or so heavily punished, because it seems to relate to things of such little consequence. You may hear grown-up people talk afterwards, in a laughing manner, of the faults which they committed at school,—of their idleness, and of

the various acts of mischief, and worse than mischief, which they committed. They speak of their school faults as of things which, indeed, it was very proper for the master to punish, when he found them out ; but which, if he did not find them out, were never in danger of being punished by any one else. And when boys hear older people speak in this manner of their own past conduct, it naturally makes them think that it does not really matter much whether they behave well or ill at school, excepting always in certain points which they think are dishonourable ; and that they are just as likely to be respectable and amiable men hereafter, if they are idle and careless now, as if they were ever so attentive and industrious.

Now, I would beg those who think so to attend a little to the story in the text :—As Elisha, the prophet, was going up to Bethel, “there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said to him, Go up, thou bald head ; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.” Now, some say that the word which is here translated “little children,” means rather “boys, or young men ;” but, however this be, it is certain, (and that is the point to which I want to bring you,) that

the persons thus heavily punished were persons not grown up to manhood; they had all the excuse that youth could give them. And the offence too was probably one which we should call rather carelessness and idle mischief, than deliberate wickedness. They insulted Elisha, just as I am afraid that persons, with any thing in their appearance at all strange or remarkable, are sometimes insulted now. It was Elisha's baldness which they laughed at, in the very spirit of idle boys, at all times, and in all countries. They laughed at him too as a prophet; just in the way that congregations of Methodists, for example, have been sometimes laughed at and disturbed among us, and their singing and preaching made a jest of. But for this offence, we are told that the prophet cursed them in the name of the Lord, and that "there came forth two bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." The point for you to observe is, that God is angry with the faults of young persons as with those of grown-up men, and that He punishes them as heavily. Of course, the rest of the story is not applicable: God's punishments are not now punishments upon our bodies in this life, but punishments upon our immortal bodies after the resurrection, when we shall all be called before the judgment-seat of Christ. And a man, who, being thus insulted, were to curse those who were insulting

him, and to wish for God's judgments upon them, would certainly now be a great deal worse than the boys who had provoked him. But that is not our concern : nor are we considering the conduct of Elisha, but the punishment inflicted by God upon those who had offended him, and which is recorded in the Scriptures for our example.

I take this story, then, as teaching us what I think we very much need to be taught, namely, that the faults of our youth, and those which are most natural to us at that age, are not considered by God as trifling, but are punished by Him after the same measure as the sins of men. And it is very easy to explain why men should often speak of them as trifling, and look back upon their own conduct at school with little or no concern. The reason is, because they measure the guilt of faults by the harm which they do in this world, and not by the harm which they do in unfitting us for the kingdom of God, by making us unlike God and Christ. Now it is very certain that the faults of boys do not do any very great harm in the world : when boys ill-treat one another, it is very seldom that the injury is so serious as to be felt in after life ; when they lie, the consequence of their lie is, perhaps, no more than to save themselves from punishment ; when they are extravagant and run in debt, it is very often only to the amount

of a few shillings, which it does not seriously inconvenience their friends to pay. Nay, when they are idle, it very often happens that their worldly interest in after life does not seriously suffer from it. Men then, feeling that their own faults in manhood produce so much more serious consequences,—that extravagance and idleness are then absolute ruin to many others besides themselves,—that the indulgence of violent and cruel passions then may absolutely lead to murder,—and that falsehood, or theft, would at once cause them to be driven out of society,—comparing, I say, these serious worldly consequences of the faults of mankind, with the very light worldly consequences of the faults of boyhood, and not considering, in either case, that the real evil of every fault is its offence in the sight of God, its making us more unlike his image, and more like the image of the devil, and, therefore, more unfit for the company of God, and more fit for the company of devils,—they are apt to laugh at what they call the mere tricks and idleness of their youth, and thus to encourage those young persons who hear them, to go on without scruple in the very same track of carelessness.

But what is it, then, that Jesus Christ means when He tells us, that, “he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much;” and “that if we have not been faithful in the unrighteous

mammon, who will commit to our trust the true riches?" He means, that when we talk of the consequences of our actions, we forget, that as in one point of view the consequences of the greatest crimes that the most powerful tyrant ever committed, are as the least thing in the sight of God, so, in another, the consequences of the common school faults of the youngest boy are infinitely great. The desolation of mighty kingdoms, the ruin of thousands of families, blood, and fire, and murder, and famine, and pestilence, which follow so often in the train of war,—these are evils which seem to us so monstrous, that the man, who for his own selfish pride and ambition, brings them upon mankind, appears, indeed, deserving of God's heaviest judgments:—for we make God to see with our eyes, and to view that as important in itself which is important to us. But what if we merely look up to the sky on any starlight night, and fix our eyes upon some one of the smallest stars that are there shining in their brightness? That little star, that little bright point in infinite space, is, probably, a sun as large and as powerful as ours, and gives light and heat, not to one, but to several worlds like this in which we live, each of them filled, it may be, with reasonable beings, with hopes and fears, and pains and pleasures, as important to them as ours to us. Now if this star, this little star in our eyes,—but, in truth,

this sun of more than one world like ours,—if this star, with all its worlds, were to perish in an instant, how infinitely small should we regard the loss of it! What a less than an atom, in our estimate, would be the happiness or the misery of all the beings who would thus be destroyed in an instant! So, too, to all the beings of other worlds may the happiness and misery of mankind, and all the evils which the worst tyranny ever inflicted, seem as infinitely trifling; far, far more so, than we can regard the slightest fault, or the lightest suffering of the youngest boy. But God judges differently: that is to Him important, and that He wills his creatures to regard as important, which is an offence against his laws, a departure from his likeness. And of this, even of sin, He has willed the consequences to be infinite; not confined to the happiness or misery of a few years, but of all eternity. So then, if you displease God, which you know you do by every fault, the evil of your conduct is infinite, and its consequences are infinite; not doing injury here, but doing injury far greater—injury to your immortal souls, ruin to your immortal happiness. “He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.” Here is the reason given, why the faults of your boyhood are so serious, because they show a temper that does not love God, and a heart unrenewed by his Holy Spirit;—a temper and a heart, which,

as they follow in boyhood and youth the faults of youth, so in manhood will they follow the faults of manhood, not, perhaps, those which men regard as infamous, but the faults which God no less abhors ; and having thus, in their state of trial, fitted themselves, not for more perfect good, but for greater ripeness in evil, their portion will be evil throughout eternity.

SERMON VIII.

MATT. XVIII. 6.—*Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

YOU see, by the strong language which our Lord here uses, that the sin which He is threatening in these words is a very great one;—and He goes on to repeat the threat in the verse following:—“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” Some of you, I trust, will know already what the words mean, and will see directly what I am going to turn them to;—for it is a passage which I have often dwelt upon, as it is one which, while it is generally useful to all persons, strikes especially at one of the greatest sins of schools. But there are many, I dare say, who do not know what it means; and who have never thought, when they heard this solemn threat read in the church, that they were themselves some of the very persons concerned in it;—that they were daily “offending,” in the Scripture meaning of the word, some of Christ’s little ones. I could not indeed have chosen a text

which came home more directly to your daily practice, than the one which I have just read: I could not have noticed any sin with which your consciences will tell you, the moment that our Lord's words are explained to you, that you are more familiar. I proceed, therefore, to explain them; and will then apply them, in one or two common instances, to your life and daily habits. When our Lord speaks of offending one of these little ones who believe in Him, I should first say that the word "offend," in common speech, has a very different meaning from that in which the translators of the Bible have here used it. You know that our translation was made more than two hundred years ago: so that it is not wonderful that some words in the course of that time have changed their meanings. "Offend," in the text, and in many other places in the New Testament, means "to tempt or lead another into sins:" so that by "offending one of these little ones," our Lord does not mean "vexing them," "making them angry," or "ill-using them:" but "tempting or leading them into evil," or "throwing any hindrances in the way of their doing what they ought to do." It is this which He calls so wicked, that it were better for us to die this moment than be guilty of it. But now, by "little ones," whom are we to understand? Jesus had just before taken a little child, and set him in the midst, and told

his disciples, that unless they were converted and became as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. And then He says, that "they must not mislead or tempt to evil one of these little ones who believe in him." Now, a very little child cannot believe in Christ, because he cannot understand much about Him. And we know also, that it must be a sin to tempt any one to evil, whether they be really little children in age or no. But the more like children they are,—that is, the more ignorant, and simple-minded, and ready to believe and to do what others tell them,—so much the more wicked it is to tell them wrong, or to hinder them from going right. It applies then to any one who is young in character, even though he should happen to be old in years; but it applies particularly to those who are at once young in years and young in character. It applies therefore particularly to those boys who are desirous of doing their duty, who have no great confidence in themselves, but are ready to be guided by others; who are shy and timid, and unable to stand against laughter or ill-usage. There are such in every school; and it is the worst reproach of schools, and the most awful responsibility for all who are connected with them, to think that so many of them are utterly lost in consequence of the temptations which they here meet with: they are "offended," in the Scripture

sense of the word, that is, they are laughed or frightened out of their Saviour's service, and taught very often ere long, not only to deny their Lord themselves, but to join in "offending" others who are now as innocent as they once were, and to draw them over to the worship and service of Satan, to which their own souls are already abandoned.

Now, then, you see what the text means, and you feel how it applies to you. You know that there are amongst you many boys who remember and wish to keep the lessons that they have received at home; and you know also, how much it is the fashion of schools to teach just the contrary. And I will take two instances which will have come, I fear, often enough within the experience of you all. I mean the case of idleness, and the case of extravagance.

First, for Idleness. There are boys who have either never learnt, or have quite forgotten all that may have been told them at home, of the duty of attending to their school-lessons. We know that there are boys who think all their lessons merely tiresome, and who are resolved never to take any more trouble about them, than what they cannot possibly avoid. But being thus idle themselves, they cannot bear that others should be more attentive. We all know the terms of reproach and ridicule which are thrown

out against a boy who works in earnest and upon principle. He is laughed at for taking unnecessary trouble, for being afraid of punishment, or for wishing to gain favour with his masters, and be thought by them to be better than other boys. Either of these reproaches is one which a boy finds it very hard to bear:—he does not like to be thought afraid, or plodding, or as wishing to court favour. He has not age, or sense, or firmness enough to know and to answer, that the only fear of which he need be ashamed is the fear of his equals, the fear of those who are in no respect better than himself, and have therefore no sort of right to direct him. To be afraid then of other boys is, in a boy, the same sort of weakness as it is in a man to be afraid of other men : and as a man ought to be equally ashamed of fearing men, and not fearing God ; so a boy ought to be ashamed of fearing boys, and also to be ashamed of not fearing his parents and instructors. And as, in after life, the fear of God makes no man do anything mean or dishonourable, but the fear of men does lead to all sorts of weakness and baseness ; so amongst boys the fear of their parents and teachers will only make them manly, and noble, and high-spirited ; but the fear of their companions leads them to every thing low, and childish, and contemptible. Those boys, then, who try to make others idle, and laugh at them for trying to

please their masters, are exactly like the men who laugh at their neighbours for being religious, and for living in the fear of God ; and both are like the more hardened ruffians in a gang of thieves or other criminals, whose amusement it is to laugh at the fear of justice, which beginners in crime have not yet quite got over. In all these instances there is not only the guilt of our own sin, but the far worse guilt of encouraging sin in others ; and, as I showed you last Sunday how your school faults, although very trifling in their worldly consequences, were yet as serious in the sight of God, as the faults of grown men, because they showed that you were not serving or loving Him, but serving and loving evil : so it may be said, without the least going beyond the truth, that a boy who, being idle himself, tries to make others idle also, is exactly “offending one of those little ones who believe in Christ,” and is in the daily habit of that sin which Christ says it were better for him to die directly, than to be guilty of.

Again, with regard to extravagance, and the breach of school regulations. There are some boys who, remembering the wishes of their parents, are extremely unwilling to incur debts, and to spend a great deal of money upon their own eating, and drinking, and amusements. There are some too, who, knowing that the use of wine or any liquor of that sort is

forbidden, because the use of it among boys is sure to be the abuse of it, would not wish to indulge in anything of the kind themselves. But they are assailed by the example, and the reproaches, and the laughter of others. It is mean, and poor spirited, and ungenerous, not to contribute to the pleasures and social enjoyments of their companions; in short, not to do as others do. The charge of stinginess, of not spending his money liberally, is one which a boy is particularly sore of hearing. He forgets that in his case such a charge is the greatest possible folly. Where is the generosity of spending money which is not your own, and which, as soon as it is spent, is to be supplied again with no sacrifice on your part? Where is the stinginess of not choosing to beg money of your dearest friends, in order to employ it in a manner which those friends would disapprove of?—for, after all, the money must come from them, as you have it not, nor can you earn it for yourselves. But there is another laugh behind: a boy is laughed at for being kept so strictly at home that he cannot get money as he likes; and he is taught to feel ashamed and angry at the hard restraint which is laid upon him. Truly that boy has gone a good way in the devil's service, who will dare to set another against his father and his mother; who will teach him that their care and authority

are things which he should be ashamed of. Of those who can do this, well may Christ say, that "it were better for them that a millstone were tied about their neck, and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea." Yet these things are done; and the consciences of many who now hear me will say to the eye of Him who can look into the inmost heart, that they are the doers of them.

For you who are assailed by these and other such temptations,—for you whom Christ calls his children, and whom the devil and his servants would fain make ashamed of your Father and your Lord,—for you, who are laughed at because you will not be idle, or drunken, or extravagant, or undutiful, or in some way or other base and low principled,—beware lest you suffer yourself to be "offended," that is, lest you are laughed and frightened out of your eternal salvation. After all, they that are with you are more and greater than they who are against you,—all the wise, and good, and noble among yourselves; all good, and wise, and honourable men; all blessed spirits that love the service of God, and delight to aid those who are fighting in his cause; and, above all, that Holy and Eternal Spirit Himself, your Comforter and mighty Deliverer, whose aid and perpetual presence with you was purchased by

your Redeemer's blood. Trust in these, and be not afraid of all that hell and its servants can do to you: "Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

SERMON IX.

ROM. I. 16.—*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.* †

I SPOKE last Sunday of the wickedness, the very great wickedness, of tempting others to do wrong, or laughing at them and abusing them for doing right. And I said a few words, in conclusion, to those who are suffering under this trial, encouraging them to go on without fear, knowing that He who was for them was mightier than they who were against them. But in schools, as in the world at large, the very good and the very bad are both but few; it is those who are a mixture of good and bad who make up the great majority. There are, I hope and believe, very few, if any, among you, who wilfully follow after what is evil; who, in the words of the Psalm, hate to be reformed, and who cast God's words behind them. It is unnatural that, at your age, you should be so confirmed in evil as this. On the other hand, they too, I fear, cannot be many, although I hope and believe there are some, who may fairly be said to be amongst the honest and good hearts, which, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit, "some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some fifty." This also, I fear,

is unnatural: for ripened goodness in unripe age can be scarcely more looked for than ripened wickedness. The great majority of you will certainly be between these two points; wishing to be good when they think seriously about it, and honouring it when they hear of it at a distance, and being actually good in some things themselves; but, very generally, not thinking seriously about it, not honouring it, but often laughing at it, when it comes before them in the conduct of their companions in common life; and, in many points, being very far from good in their own practice. It is to these, then, quite as much as to the few who are already serving God more entirely, that what I am going to say will be addressed; it is these whom I am going to urge "not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." You will be, perhaps, inclined to say, that you are not ashamed of it, and should think very ill of any one who were to say that he was so. And you may, possibly, have heard the words explained of those people in the old times, who were afraid to call themselves Christians, because they would be rejected by their families and friends, and, perhaps, be exposed to imprisonment or death, if they had confessed the name of Jesus. Certainly, such times are happily over, and no one runs any risk of being cast off by his friends, or punished by the law, for calling himself a Christian. But

I am not sure that he would not run some risk, not of being punished by the law, but of being looked at very strangely, at least by many of his friends and acquaintance, for always acting like a Christian. And this applies very much to you here. You know that what is called false shame is wonderfully strong in keeping you from acting as you ought to do in many respects; and I will give some common instances of it,—some in what are called particularly religious duties, and others in matters which are, in fact, no less matters of religion, though they are not called so.

To begin with the first sort. I am very far from saying that the practice of prayer, or of reading the Bible, or of coming to the communion, is, in itself, generally delightful to you. If you were really fond of these things, you would be a good deal further advanced in the love of Christ than we may dare to expect. But although not generally delightful, yet I believe that they would be practised oftener than they are, if it were not for a false shame of what may be said or thought by others. It would seem very strange to be seen reading the Bible; and it would be thought unusual, or, at least, you would be afraid lest it should be thought so, if any boy, not in the higher part of the school, were to go to the communion. The false shame, in the latter case, takes a very artful

form ; it is not only a fear of being thought over-religious, but a fear of being thought to receive the sacrament in order to please man rather than God : in other words, you sometimes are afraid to come to the Lord's table, lest you should be thought to be only trying to make *us* think well of you, not to obey the command of Christ. Now, certainly, it gives me pleasure to see a number of you attending the communion ; and it does so for this reason, because I do not believe that there is one amongst you so wicked and so foolish as to think of going to that holy table only to deceive his master, and make him think him religious. Boys may, and I fear do, try to deceive us in some things. I can fancy some of you wishing to make me think you diligent, when you were really idle ; to make me think you quiet and orderly, when you were forward in mischief : but I cannot fancy any one of you wishing to make me think you religious, when you were most grossly profane, and daring to come to the holy communion, solely for the purpose of making me believe a lie. This would be a monstrous and unnatural hypocrisy, and one which I am sure it is not in the nature of boys to be guilty of. And, therefore, I am glad when I see many of you at the sacrament, because I believe that you are come there in earnest. But my pleasure arises from this ;—not that I believe those who come are

actually better in their general conduct than many of those who do not come; but because it gives them a chance of becoming so. The communion is like a medicine for the soul; and if we see people willing to take their medicine, we are pleased, not because there is any merit in their taking it, but because we think, that, whereas without it they could not have recovered, now, at least, it is possible that they may. If I see a boy at the communion, it is an earnest that he has had some serious thoughts, that he has made some good resolutions, and has put up, or will do so before he leaves the chapel, some sincere and earnest prayers. The effect of all this may, it is true, be very short-lived; it may never bring forth any fruit that man may notice; I may never have reason to think that the boy is really the better for having attended the communion: still I am glad to see him there, because I feel that, at that time at least, he is resolving and praying to be better. And this I believe, and will believe, of every individual whom I see there; and you yourselves, I think, would agree with me, and would not suspect any one of your number of going to that holy table from any other reason, than because he was, at that time at least, wishing to become better, and desirous of taking the means that Christ has recommended to make him better.

But, after all, I will go further; for it is a

thing which it concerns you to hear, and I will not shrink from speaking it. At your age, the good opinion and approbation of your masters is a thing which you ought not to be ashamed to desire. As a lower motive, and as one that may help you gradually to ascend to a higher one, I say you ought not to be ashamed of it; but rather to be ashamed of not feeling it. What folly is it to tax such a motive as this with meanness! It might, possibly, be meanness, if you could gain any actual profit by it; if, because we thought well of a boy, he had more holidays, or less work, or more indulgences of some kind or another than his companions; or if he would not be punished, if, relying on our good opinion, he were to be guilty of any offence. Our good opinion of a boy, in point of moral character, would do him no other good, than the mere pleasure of feeling that he possessed it; and certainly there are few pleasures purer in their nature than this. Or, if we expressed our good opinion of him to his parents, it would, no doubt, give them great pleasure, and he would have the greater delight of knowing that they approved and respected him; but, beyond this, I doubt whether it would procure him the same actual rewards, or additional indulgences, as if he had carried home with him a prize for successful diligence and ability in school business. I say, then, that there is nothing to be got from

our good opinion, in that gross sense in which low minds, who can understand nothing generous or noble, are accustomed to think of *getting*. But there is to be got from it a pure and truly desirable pleasure—the good opinion and respect of those, who, from age and situation, are capable of forming an opinion, and whom it is your duty to try to satisfy, as they are, by God's appointment, under your parents, your teachers and judges, and those who have to watch for your souls as men who shall give account to Him who is at once their Master and yours.

I now proceed to the remaining part of my subject, and am to give instances, in matters not commonly called religious, of that shame so often felt by young persons at following the Gospel of Christ, and feeling as Christ would have them feel. And it happens that here we have the example of our Lord Himself recorded for our benefit. Very little has, as we know, been mentioned of our Lord's early life, and nothing at all is told merely to satisfy our curiosity. Yet in the short story from which the words of the text are taken, we find a lesson given as to the very main points of our duty when young; as, in the fuller record of his older life, we find our guide and example for those points on which we most need instruction in manhood. And it is worth while to notice what those points are: they are, first, an earnest

desire to improve himself, that so he might be fit for his Father's service, when he should be arrived at riper years; and, secondly, a dutiful obedience to his parents, while he was as yet under age. Further, to show that this is an example exactly suited to your case who now hear me, I may just remind you that our Lord was at this time twelve years old, a period neither too late nor too early to fit it exactly for your imitation. I have already spoken of the false shame which often hinders you from performing what are peculiarly called your religious duties. But, strange to say, you sometimes learn to feel ashamed of indulging your natural affections, and particularly of being attached to your mothers and sisters, and fond of their society. You fancy it is unmanly to be thought to be influenced by them, and you are afraid of being supposed to long too much for their tenderness and indulgent kindness towards you. Thus you affect a bluntness and hardness which, at first, you cannot put on without an effort; but the effort is made, and that from a false shame of being laughed at for seeming too fond of home. The effort is made, and it is continued,—till, sometimes, I fear, it ceases to be an effort, and the coldness, which was at first merely put on, becomes at last a natural temper. I am afraid it cannot be doubted that it is peculiarly the effect of the public schools of

England, to lower and weaken the connexion between parent and child, to lessen mutual confidence, and to make a son regard his father with more of respect than of love. Certainly, at least, the relation in other countries of Europe is on a different footing : there is more of cordial intimacy, more of real familiar friendship, between parents and children, than generally exists among us. And the cause of this difference belongs greatly, I think, to the feelings and habits acquired at school. In the first place, you are absent from home so large a portion of the year, that other persons and other objects engross, of necessity, a large share of your thoughts and feelings. The absence, certainly, you cannot help ; but you may help increasing its natural effect by your own conduct. You become ashamed of speaking of your homes and relations in the natural language of a good heart ; you talk of them to one another as affording you such and such enjoyments ; and you are ashamed if it appears that other boys have greater liberty, and are more indulged at home than yourselves. And this extends to school also : you do not like to have less money than other boys,—to have fewer presents sent you,—to find your friends more unwilling to pay your debts, than the friends of other boys are to pay theirs. This not only interferes with your pleasures, but hurts your pride ; and I

believe that the annoyance to your pride is very often what you mind the most. Thus talking, and thus feeling towards home, the effect of long absence is increased tenfold; concealment and restraint are sometimes the dispositions with which you meet your fathers: you do not like to tell them all that you have done; and you think yourselves hardly used if your requests have not been all complied with. In this undutiful and unchildlike temper, the period which you spend at home is too short to soften you, You return again to school, and the mischief rapidly increases: and it too often happens, that when you go from school to college, the evil becomes yet worse; extravagance there is practised on a larger scale, and is often accompanied with other vices, which make confidence towards a parent still more difficult. Then comes actual life,—and you go to other parts of the world, or settle at a distance from your father's house: the opportunities of undoing the bad and cold impressions of early life are no more attainable: and all that passes between father and son is a few letters, and a few short visits, till the son is called on to perform his last act of duty, in following his father's body to the grave.

Far, very far, am I from saying or thinking that this is always, or even generally, the case, to the full extent: but it is the tendency of schools to produce such a state of things; it is

the tendency of that false shame, that hateful and contemptible pride, which seals your lips against the expressions of duty and affection, which makes you affect to be undutiful before you are so in reality. Yet so catching is this shame, that I am afraid even those boys among you, who have the happiness of being at once both at school and at home, are tempted to throw away their advantages. The situation of those boys I have always thought most fortunate;—with all the opportunities of forming lasting friendships with those of their own age which a public school so largely affords, and with the opportunity also of keeping up all their home affections, of never losing that lively interest in all that is said and done under their father's roof, which an absence of several months cannot fail, in some measure, to chill. Your fault then is by so much the greater, if you make yourselves strangers to domestic feelings and affections, through your own fault;—if you think you have any dearer friendships, or any that can better become either youth or manhood, than those which God Himself has marked out for you in your own homes. Add others to them if you will, and it is your wisdom and your duty to do so; but beware how you let any less sacred connexion weaken the solemn and universal bond of domestic love. Remember, that when Christ took our nature upon Him, and

went through every stage of human life to show us our peculiar duties in each, one of the only two things recorded of Him, before He arrived at manhood, is his dutiful regard to his parents: "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

The other thing recorded of Him is, that it was his pleasure to gain such knowledge as would fit Him for the discharge of his duty in active life hereafter. He was found by his parents in the temple, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." It is strangely mistaking the meaning of this account, and utterly destroying its usefulness, to call this, as some have done, "Christ's preaching in the temple,"—as if, at twelve years old, and long before He had begun his ministry, He would have attempted to teach the authorized teachers of his country. The drift of the story is wholly different: it does not represent Him as doing what no one could imitate without presumption and folly, but as doing and feeling what all those of his age ought to do, and feel also. He was anxious to gain improvement, and took pains of his own accord to gain it. How often do you neglect it when it is brought before you, and every wish of your friends urges you to acquire it! He was interested in what He heard, and tried to get a thorough understanding of it; He did

not only sit and hear what was said, as if that were in itself of any use, but He wished to heed and to profit by it. He was found hearing the doctors in the temple, and asking them questions: if anything in what they said was too hard for Him, if He could not fully comprehend it, He asked for more explanation; He asked questions about it, because he wished to know it. You will say perhaps that this was about religious subjects, and that these are very different from common lessons. It is true it was about religious subjects, but it seems that it was with a view to his future calling in life: it was to gain that knowledge, which afterwards shone forth so admirably in his own discourses, when, like the wise householder of his own parable, He brought forth out of his treasure things new and old,—and made every object in nature, and every truth relating to human society and human character, serve the purposes of the kingdom of God. The point in the example is, that you should in youth gain the knowledge which may make you better and wiser men hereafter; which may enable you to glorify God in your generation by a wise and understanding heart, and an able and eloquent tongue; which, amidst the infinitely varied relations of society in our days, where there is scarcely a subject on which ignorance does not make us less useful, and knowledge more so,

may enable you to ornament the common intercourse of life, and to direct with judgment its practical concerns, filling you with a lively perception and an ardent love of what is beautiful, of what is true, of what is good. After all, this must, in some degree, be a matter which you must at present be content to believe on the testimony of others. The object of education is to benefit your manhood; and you must, therefore, arrive at manhood before this benefit can be fully tasted or comprehended. Meantime, it is most certain, that your business here is in truth the business of your heavenly Father; that it is a duty, which he who wishes to do his Father's will must be anxious to perform zealously. "Both hearing them and asking them questions:"—not only sitting to listen to, or rising up to repeat, words which are forgotten as soon as heard or said; but anxious to remember and to understand what you say and what you hear, that the fruit of it may remain, and that you may be doing God's pleasure now, and may understand in this, as well as in other matters, when the time for knowledge is come, that no one ever tried to do his pleasure without feeling that he had chosen the better part, and that to do the will of God was the best wisdom, both for earth and heaven.

SERMON X.

JOHN XVI. 12, 13.—*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

IN these words our Lord describes two sorts of persons,—those who cannot yet bear the truth, and those who, through the guiding of the Spirit, are led into all truth. They who could not yet bear it were, we see, our Lord's own disciples;—they who had followed Him from the beginning of his ministry;—they, of whom He had just before said, that they were all clean, except Judas who betrayed Him. Still, He had much to say which they could not yet bear, but which they should be able to bear and to understand when the Spirit of truth should come, and lead them into all truth. These words were applicable to our Lord's first twelve disciples, and they are much more applicable to many of us. There are many in every age,—many I had almost said in every congregation,—who cannot bear all that Christ has to say unto them, because they are not yet led by the Spirit, and neither their hearts nor their understandings can receive the perfect truth.

If we want a more ancient example of this, the whole history of the Old Testament will

furnish one. There, although in the successive revelations of successive ages much was told, still much also was forborne: the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites was the reason why they were allowed some things, which in a riper state of knowledge men would shrink from; why there was a veil over their faces, which hid from them the end of their own dispensation. But there are many who are in this respect Israelites among us; there are many who are still living under the law, and who cannot yet understand or feel the voice of the Spirit. Christ has many things to say unto them, but they cannot bear them now.

For this reason, and because I know that, from your age and many other circumstances, many of you are of this class, I have not spoken to you, in the sermons I have lately preached from this place, in the way that some perhaps might have expected: I have not dwelt so much upon your redemption by Jesus Christ, as upon your own particular faults and temptations; I have used the language of the Law more than that of the Gospel. I have done this, because I thought it not in itself the best and highest instruction, but because I was afraid that you could not understand profitably any other. When I mention common things of your daily life,—common faults which you every day commit, common feelings which every day pass

through your hearts and minds,—you attend, and carefully take in what I am saying; but, if I were to use the language of St. Paul's Epistles, and speak of your acquittal by faith in Christ only, of your having no confidence in your own works, but being created in Christ Jesus through the Spirit to do good works, your feelings would, I fear, be very little interested. You would think that this was the common language of sermons, and would not so readily bring it home to yourselves. And I will tell you why you would not. The whole of the Gospel message is one of comfort to those who feel themselves sinners,—to those whose conscience trouble them, and who fear the anger of God, and wish to flee from it. It is a medicine for the sick, which they who do not feel themselves sick, cannot be persuaded to care for. You remember what our Lord Himself said of the different manner in which He was treated by the Pharisee who asked Him to supper, and by the woman who came in while He sat at meat, and washed his feet with her tears. "There was a certain creditor," He said, "who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most

And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." I have copied the whole of the story, for it is so striking a picture of our common state of mind towards Christ. We hear his words with respect,—the Pharisee evidently respected Christ, and wished to show his attention to Him by asking Him into his house; but, when the question is of loving Him, of believing in Him as our only Saviour, of fleeing to Him as our peace with God, through whose merits our sins are washed away, truly we feel no disposition for this. Our sins give us no anxiety; we care nothing for being at peace with God, or at enmity:—we think nothing about our need of being forgiven, and therefore feel very little love to Him who has forgiven us. It is vain therefore to talk to you of Christ, till you feel [your want of Him; it is idle to speak

to you of the mercy of your redemption, till you have some sense of the danger from which you have been redeemed. If, by having your great and daily faults brought home to you,—if, by seeing how much your lives fall short, I do not say of the law of God, but even of the lives and hearts of good men, even amidst all the imperfections of humanity,—if, by seeing how bad you are, you could learn to wish to be better,—then, indeed, you would be ripe for the doctrine of the cross of Christ; then the same Spirit, who had done his first work in making you know and feel your sin, would be ready to begin his second, of showing you through whom you are forgiven. “The law is our school-master to bring us unto Christ:” but Christ will never be sought by those who have never learned to fear the law.

True it is, your faults may be pointed out to you, and yet you may not wish to turn from them: your evil practices and evil principles may be shown to you, and yet you may continue, on the very next temptation, to follow them as before. The fear of God may be preached to you; but you will continue to be led by the fear of one another. There is nothing new in all this; for forty years the Israelites provoked God in the wilderness; and of all that great multitude who had been delivered out of Egypt, who had heard the voice

of God giving to them the law of life, and who had been fed with manna from heaven, only two continued stedfast unto the end,—only two entered into the land of promise. So it ever has been, and so it will be. If sin had no present sweetness or present advantage, who would ever be so brutishly foolish as to be guilty of it? We must not wonder at this, nor be discouraged. We are taught that sin will ruin us at last,—not that it will be sure never to gain us any worldly good. The Psalmist said, long ago, that he was grieved because he saw the ungodly in such prosperity; and the last of the prophets, Malachi, said, that many in his time thought it of no use to serve God, because they who tempted God were even delivered; that is, they who sinned often found their profit in it. So also Christ, speaking of the latter times, such as those in which we are now living, says, “that because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will wax cold:” that is, because the wicked shall go through life unpunished, many will grow tired of the service of Christ, and think that the wages of sin will answer better. Nor will it be till this earth and all that are in it are burnt up, that their calculation can be proved to have been as foolish as it was wicked. Be not, therefore, surprised at this, nor discouraged, you, whoever and how many soever you may be, who can bear Christ’s words, and are guided by Christ’s Spirit, and

love your Saviour, because He has saved your souls from sin and destruction. For you the events recorded in this week are not idle words : you have an interest in that most solemn story ; nor is it like a mere tale of other days, that Christ was betrayed, and crucified, and rose again the third day. In that death, and in that resurrection, are contained to you, all that makes it truly an infinite blessing to have been born. For you was Christ mocked, and scourged, and crucified ; for you He suffered the fear of death, and the pains of death ; for you He rose again from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept, that He might open the kingdom of heaven to all that slept in his faith and fear. For you He ascended to the right hand of the Father ; and in your hearts He lives continually by his Holy Spirit, an earnest of your full and perfect rest. For you, the partaking of the memorials of his body and blood is a solemn and a blessed privilege, reminding you at once of your sins and of your safety ;—how weak and lost in yourselves, how strong and how happy in the strength of Christ. What though you see others walking in far different courses, turning a deaf ear to all instruction,—making their belly their God, and glorying all the while in their shame,—remember that the way to destruction is ever wide and easy, and many are they who follow it. But it is better, per-

haps, to draw off our thoughts from them, lest, in thankfulness that you are not as they are, you should forget a Christian's humility and love. You have your own work to do, your own temptations to struggle with; and that worst temptation besides—that if ever you fall into sin, there will be many to triumph in it, and to glory in the weakness of a true servant of Christ. But go on still in the strength of Christ's Spirit; and though you fall, yet shall you arise and conquer at the end. And for you who are yet in suspense, not yet able to bear all Christ's words, but still aroused and inclined to listen to Him,—may the seed once sown, be mercifully preserved and fostered; may you go on, till you understand the way of God more perfectly; may it be said of you, not only “that you are not far from the kingdom of God,” but that you have, in sincerity, entered into it, and have made its holiness and its happiness your own.

SERMON XI.

[PREACHED ON TRINITY SUNDAY.]

1. TIM. III. 16.—*Great is the mystery of Godliness.*

FEW words in the New Testament have ever been more strangely misinterpreted than these; few could be found which have been equally perverted, inasmuch as they have been used to inculcate notions, the very opposite to their real meaning. They have been continually quoted, as speaking of the darkness and difficulty of some points in Christianity; whereas their real purpose is to commend the great and glorious nature of those truths which it has made known. They are understood to say, that the secrets of Christianity are wonderful, and above the understanding of men to fathom; whereas their real meaning is, that it is the revelations of Christianity which are so wonderful, that what had been hid from all the wise and prudent of the world, and what the world, by wisdom, never could have attained to, was, by the Gospel, revealed unto babes, and made so familiar, that all could know, and all might love it.

Above all, it is with reference to the great truth which the Church this day commemorates, that the supposed meaning of the text has been

as mischievous as its true meaning would be beneficial. Its supposed meaning has been mischievous, because, by teaching people to regard the Trinity as an incomprehensible mystery, it has naturally made them regard it as a subject rather awful and wonderful, than full of the deepest practical benefit. Its true meaning would be beneficial, as it calls upon us to thank God for his goodness, in having manifested Himself to us more than He had ever done before to Jew or Gentile: in having made all his goodness pass before us; in having taught us to love Him as our Redeemer, and having vouchsafed to abide with his Church for ever, as our Comforter and Sanctifier.

“Great,” indeed, “is the mystery of godliness!” great, and for ever blessed, is that secret concealed from the foundation of the world, and revealed by the Spirit of Christ to Christ’s true disciples; the secret of Him who “was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Such are the words which follow directly those that I have taken for my text; and how much is there to be found in them!

It is well known that about one word in this passage there is a great uncertainty; that whereas our translation runs, “Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh,” &c.;

there is very high authority, and many very strong reasons, for reading, "Great is the mystery of godliness, who was manifest in the flesh," &c.; that is to say, "Great are the truths concerning that wonderful Person, whom the Gospel has revealed to us; for he was manifest in the flesh," &c. He calls Christ the "Mystery of Godliness," or, "the great Secret revealed by the Gospel;" inasmuch as He is the Author and Finisher of our Faith, and the one great subject of the Gospel revelation. I mention this because, in preaching on a text of which any of the words are doubtful, it is right to state plainly that there is a doubt about them. But as our common reading, if not the true one in word, is a very exact and forcible expression of it in spirit, so I shall follow it on the present occasion, without pretending to enter upon any critical questions, for which this is neither the time nor the place.

The substance, then, of the Gospel revelation is, that God was manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit; that He was seen of angels, and preached to the Gentiles; that He was believed on in the world, and received up into glory. Now let us attend to each of these points in order.

The first words are similar to those of St. Peter, where he says that Christ was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;"

or, to those again of St. Paul himself, in the Epistle to the Romans, where he says, that Christ was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh; but declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." In all these places, and in more which might be quoted, there is a distinction drawn between the flesh and the Spirit; between the human nature of Christ and his divine nature; between the Son of Man and the Son of God. Because we were sinners, He became man, and died; but because He was God, He was not only Himself freed from death, but we also, through faith in Him, shall be raised to life also. We were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son; and, being reconciled, are saved by his life, because He broke the bands of death, and liveth for evermore, through the Divine Spirit which was in Him.

Next it says, "He was seen of angels, and preached to the Gentiles." By the word "angels," or "messengers," is meant, not only those spiritual beings whom we commonly call by that name, but their earthly fellow-servants also, the prophets and apostles, who have been permitted to share with them in the great work of giving glory to God, and doing good to men. By these, says the Apostle, "God in Christ was seen." God the Father, as He is in Himself, no man

hath seen, or can see; but “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” In Him God has spoken to man face to face: with Abraham, on the plain of Mamre; with Moses, on Mount Sinai; again with Moses and Elijah, on Mount Tabor; with his chosen apostles, for weeks and months together, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee; with Paul, the last of the apostles, as with one born out of due time. He spoke, after his ascension, from heaven. But these all saw and believed; these, his earthly messengers, as well as those heavenly ones who announced his birth to the shepherds, and his resurrection to his sorrowing disciples; these all saw Him with their eyes, and heard Him, and talked with Him. Of them He was seen; and by them, his witnesses, He was preached unto the Gentiles. They who sat in darkness, and who lived without Him in the world, to them was his salvation made known, and his holy name declared. And, lest they might, after all, be disposed to envy the lot of his chosen messengers, who had seen Him with their eyes,—while to them He was only preached, they but heard of Him from the reports of others,—his own especial word has been recorded for their—I had better say for our—comfort; for their case is ours. “Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Lastly, it says, “that he was believed on in

the world, and received up into glory." This comes naturally after the words that had just been used before. He was preached to the Gentiles, and they believed: the kingdoms of the earth did Him homage; from the rising to the going down of the sun, all nations have heard of his name, and all the world is full of his glory. Not in one little country only, or amongst one single people; but all the ends of the earth have heard the salvation of our God, and Egypt and Babylon are become united with Israel,—a blessing in the midst of the land. This is the kingdom of Christ; this is the fruit of his sufferings, and of the labours of his servants. But here it is no more "God manifest in the flesh," or seen with the outward eyes of his messengers. "He was received up into glory;"—He went away that the Comforter might come unto his people in his stead;—He ceased to be manifest in the flesh, to be seen with the bodily eye, that his Spirit might be made manifest to our spirits, that He might be more than seen by those who willingly received Him, and in whose hearts He found a temple, wherein He might continually abide. "He was received up into glory, and gave gifts unto men;"—the gift of his Holy Spirit, which, so long as He was manifest in the flesh, was not given. St. Paul himself has taught us to associate the ascension of Christ with the descent of the Holy

Spirit; and, indeed, were we not so to associate it, it would rather be a subject of sorrow than of joy. The revelation of the Gospel ends then with its concluding and final truth, that the Son of God was taken up into glory, and that the Spirit of God was to abide with his people, till the Son shall again return from heaven, when all things are at last accomplished. He was manifested in the flesh to take away our sins, and was received up into glory when the kingdom of heaven was opened by his blood to all believers, and his Spirit henceforth was required to fit them for entrance into that kingdom, by forming them again after his image.

This then is the mystery of godliness;—this is the great truth, unknown and undiscoverable by our unaided reason, which the Gospel has now made known to us. For what we know of God the Father, although that too has mercifully been confirmed by his own word, yet, according to St. Paul, it was not undiscoverable by our own reason, but rather it is made a matter of blame that men did not make it out for themselves. The works of creation so clearly declare their author, that they who turned from the worship of the one true God to make to themselves gods of things created, whether in heaven or in earth, are left, in the words of the Apostle, without excuse. The knowledge then of God the Father,—I mean such knowledge of Him as

we have ever gained, or can gain,—is not called a mystery; because a mystery, in the language of the apostles, means a truth revealed, which we could not have found out if it had not been told us. Yet, as experience has shown that men did not, in fact, make themselves acquainted with God the Father, so it has been mercifully ordered, that even what we could have discovered, if we would, has yet been expressly revealed to us; and the Law and the Prophets are no less full and plain in pointing out our relations to God the Father, than the Gospel is in pointing out our relations to God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

I would beg attention to these words, “that the Scripture is full and clear in pointing out our relations to God.” For the revelations or mysteries of the Gospel, like those of the Law and the Prophets, never pretend to tell us anything of the nature of God as He is in Himself. This, indeed, is a mystery; not in the sense in which that word is used in the Scripture, but in the sense in which we commonly use it now: it is not a truth revealed, which could not otherwise have been known; but a truth which has not and cannot be revealed, and which cannot be known at all. And mysteries of this sort, and in this sense, are indeed incomprehensible; but then they are no part of revelation, as it is in fact a flat contradiction to talk of revealing

or making visible what is not and cannot be revealed. Such points as this are no matters of belief; for it is folly to talk of believing what we cannot understand. I do not mean that we cannot believe a thing unless we understand *how* it is effected; but that we cannot believe it unless we understand *what* it means;—as otherwise, it is evident, that we can only believe that something is something: we can no more believe it, than we could believe a proposition in an unknown language. But far, very far, are the truths revealed in the Scriptures, from being of such a character as this. We cannot indeed understand *how* the divine and human natures were united in the person of Christ, nor *how* the Holy Spirit influences our minds; but we can full well understand, and know, and feel, what it is that is meant, when it is said, that He who was in the form of God, that is, whose being and nature were divine, “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man;”—or, when it is said, that, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;”—or when, again, we are told that God “will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,”—and that his Holy Spirit strives with our evil nature, is grieved by our wilful and ungrateful coldness, and is utterly blasphemed by our continued hardness and

impenitence. We all can understand what this means: would to God, that we all, in the Scripture sense of the word, *believed* it: that is, that it had entered not only into our understandings, but into our very heart of hearts, a daily living fountain of peace, and hope, and joy.

True it is, that this Bread of Life does not nourish us all; and instead of seeing that the fault is in ourselves, and that to our sickly bodies the most wholesome food will lose its virtue, we are apt to question the power and usefulness of the food itself. True it is that if we were but good and holy, it would be an idle question to ask about our faith, when our lives sufficiently declared it. So, if a man were strong and healthy, it would be needless to inquire about the quality of his food. But not more foolish is it to suppose that a man can be strong and healthy without wholesome food, than to think that we can be good and holy without a Christian's faith. Even with that faith, how far are we from what we ought to be—even the best and holiest of us all! Yet those who have tried it know, that without that faith they would be nothing at all; and that, in whatever degree they have overcome the world or themselves, it is owing to their faith in the promises of God the Father, resting on the atonement of the blood of his Son, and given and strengthened by the abiding aid and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

SERMON XII.

GAL. III. 24.—*The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.*

IN the sermon which I preached last Sunday from this place, I could not forbear from entering into some detail upon the great and peculiar truths of Christianity. The day seemed to call for such a choice of a subject, as it was set apart to commemorate; not one part only of the scheme of our redemption, like the feast of Christmas, or Easter, or Whitsuntide, but the whole of it, together: all our relations to God, and all that God has done for us, are concentrated in a manner in the celebration of Trinity Sunday. Yet, even at the very time when I was thus dwelling on the great truths of the Gospel, I doubted whether my hearers were sufficiently advanced to receive them. I do not mean advanced in understanding,—for in that respect they are indeed easy,—but advanced in Christian feelings and Christian practice. By what strange error could it have ever happened that the doctrines of the Gospel have been regarded as little bearing upon our practice, but because the practice of so many, who call themselves Christians, has been unfit to receive them? It is an awful, but a

certain truth, that the very foundation of Christianity, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," is heard continually with no lively impression of the inestimable blessing conveyed in it. How should it rightly be valued, when we care so little about the evil of sin, and think there is nothing very alarming in the condition of a sinner? Therefore the words of the apostle are for ever useful, and apply to the successive stages of our individual growth, no less than to the successive periods in the existence of the world; "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ:" and it is vain to hope that we shall ever attain to the full faith and love of a Christian, without having first gone to school to the teaching of the law.

For this reason it is, that on former occasions I have spoken less than some, perhaps, might expect, of the promises of the Gospel; and have dwelt much more upon your own individual faults and duties. Assuredly, if any one among you were filled with an entire hatred of sin,—if he were thoroughly anxious to become like God, and felt most deeply the infinite distance between the most pure and most high God, and himself a sinner,—to such an one I would hasten to hold forth the Gospel promises,—to such an one I would repeat all those comfortable words, of which the Scripture is so full—that there is no condemnation for those who believe in Christ,

and that all who believe in Him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. I would say, that, through the aid of Christ's Spirit, they should be daily renewed after Christ's image, till their resemblance to God should be the sure sign that they were, indeed, the children of God. This, I say, is the language which we should use to those who are really anxious about their salvation; who really are dissatisfied with and distrust themselves, and love and entirely desire to please God. It was when the publican said, in sincerity and earnestness of heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner," that he went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. It was when Job confessed that he had endeavoured to justify himself in vain, and that he now abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes, that the answer of God was given, that he had spoken the thing that was right, and that his latter end should be blessed more than his beginning. But I fear, that, to most of you, the best proof that the mercies of your redemption are not the fittest subject on which to address you, is contained in the fact, that you are so little interested in hearing of them: "The law then must be your schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ;" that is, we must try if, by any means, declaring to you the pure and perfect law of God, and contrasting it with your

own principles and practice, we can succeed in making you feel your sin and your danger, and so, ready and eager to fly to Christ for deliverance.

What the aspect of public schools is, when viewed with a Christian's eye,—and what are the feelings with which men, who do really turn to God in after life, look back upon their years passed at school,—I cannot express better than in the words of one¹ who had himself been at a public school, who did afterwards become a most exemplary Christian, and who, in what I am going to quote, seems to describe his own experience: "Public schools," he says, "are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be unavoidable, or it may not; but the fact is indisputable. None can pass through a large school without being pretty intimately acquainted with vice; and few, alas! very few, without tasting too largely of that poisoned bowl. The hour of grace and repentance at length arrives, and they are astonished at their former fatuity. The young convert looks back with inexpressible regret to those hours which have been wasted in folly, or worse than folly: and the more lively his sense of the newly discovered mercies, the more piercing his anguish for past indulgences." Now, although too many of us may not be able

¹ The late Mr. John Bowdler.—See his "Remains," vol. ii. p. 153. Third edition.

to join in the last part of this description, yet we must all, I think, be able to bear witness to the truth of the first part. We may not all share in the after repentance, but we must know that our school life has given ample cause for repentance. "Public schools are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be unavoidable, or it may not; but the fact is indisputable." These are the words of the sensible and excellent man whom I have just alluded to: and with what feelings ought we all to read them, and to listen to them! I am afraid the fact is, indeed, indisputable—"Public schools *are* the very seats and nurseries of vice." But he goes on to say, "It may be unavoidable, or it may not:" and these words seem to me as though they ought to fill us with the deepest shame of all. For what a notion does it give, that we should have been so long and so constantly bad, that it may be doubted whether our badness be not unavoidable—whether we are not evil hopelessly and incurably! And this to be true of places which were intended to be seats of Christian education; and in all of which, I believe, the same words are used in the daily prayers which we use regularly here! God is thanked for those founders and benefactors, "by whose benefits the whole school is brought up to godliness and good learning!" Brought up to godliness and good learning, in places that are the very seats and nurseries of

vice! But the doubt, whether our viciousness be or be not unavoidable, is something too horrible to be listened to. Surely we cannot regard ourselves as so utterly reprobate, as so thoroughly accursed of God. "The earth, which beareth briars and thorns, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus speak;" or else, indeed, our labour would be utterly vain. But then our hope that this viciousness is not unavoidable, depends upon you, whether or no you choose to make it so. Outward order, regularity, nay, even advancement in learning, may be, up to a certain point, enforced; but no man can force another to be good, or hinder him from being evil. It must be your own choice and act, whether, indeed, you wish this place to be "unavoidably a seat and nursery of vice," or whether you wish to verify the words of our daily thanksgiving, that, by the benefit of our founder, "you are here brought up to godliness and good learning."

But, it may be asked, what is meant when public schools are called "the seats and nurseries of vice?" It is not difficult to find out in what sense a Christian writer must have used the expression. That is properly a nursery of vice, where a boy unlearns the pure and honest principles which he may have received at home, and

gets, in their stead, others which are utterly low, and base, and mischievous,—where he loses his modesty, his respect for truth, and his affectionateness, and becomes coarse, and false, and unfeeling. That, too, is a nursery of vice, and most fearfully so, where vice is bold, and forward, and presuming; and goodness is timid and shy, and existing as if by sufferance—where the good, instead of setting the tone of society, and branding with disgrace those who disregard it, are themselves exposed to reproach for their goodness, and shrink before the open avowal of evil principles, which the bad are striving to make the law of the community. That is a nursery of vice, where the restraints laid upon evil are considered as so much taken from liberty, and where, generally speaking, evil is more willingly screened and concealed, than detected and punished. What society would be, if men regarded the laws of God and man as a grievance, and thought liberty consisted in following to the full their proud, and selfish, and low inclinations,—that schools to a great extent are: and, therefore, they may be well called, “the seats and nurseries of vice.”

Now, then, to what is this owing? Public schools are made up of the very same persons whom we have known, a few years earlier, to be pure-minded and obedient children,—whom we know, a few years later, to be at least decent

and useful men. What especial cloud hangs over this one part of our life's current, that the stream here will ever run dark and sullen, while on its earlier and its later course it is either all bright and lively, or the impurity of its waters is lost to the distant view in the breadth and majesty of their volume! I must touch upon the causes, or how shall we be able to point out the remedies?

Unquestionably, the time of life at which you are arrived, and more particularly the younger boys among you, is, in itself, exceedingly dangerous. It is just the time, beyond all others in life, when temptation is great, and the strength of character to resist it exceedingly small. Earlier, under your parents' roof, the taint of evil reached you with far less virulence,—you were surrounded with all influences of good. Later, you will be exposed, indeed, to enough of evil, but you will have gained at least more experience and more strength of mind, to resist it. It is a great matter, too, that your bodies, at your time of life, so far outgrow your minds;—that your spirits and bodily strength are so vigorous and active, while your understandings are, in comparison, so feeble. This makes you unapt and unwilling to think; and he who does not think must surely do one of two things,—he must submit himself entirely to be guided by the advice and direction of others,

like young children, or else he must certainly go wrong. Another cause is, that at no place, or time of life, are people so much the slaves of custom, as boys at school. If a thing has been an old practice, be it ever so mischievous, ever so unworthy, it is continued without scruple ; if a thing is new, be it ever so useful, and ever so excellent, it is apt to be regarded as a grievance. The question which boys seem to ask is not, What ought we to be, and what may the school become, if we do our duty?—but What have we been used to, and is the school as good as it was formerly? So looking backwards instead of looking forwards,—comparing ourselves with ourselves, instead of with the Word of God,—we are sure never to grow better, because we lose the wish to become better: and growth in goodness will never come, without our vigorous efforts to attain to it. This cause extends a great way, and produces more evil than we are apt to think of. Old habits, old practices, are handed down from generation to generation, and, above all, old feelings. Now it is certain that education, like every thing else, was not brought to perfection when our great schools were first founded: the system had a great deal required to make it what it ought to be. I am afraid that Christian principles were not enough brought forward: that lower motives were encouraged, and a lower standard altogether

suffered to prevail. The system also was too much one of fear and outward obedience; the obedience of the heart and the understanding were little thought of. And the consequence has been the same in every old school in England,—that boys have learnt to regard themselves and their masters as opposites to one another, as having two distinct interests;—it being the master's object to lay on restrictions, and abridge their liberty, while it was their business, by all sorts of means—combination amongst themselves, concealment, trick, open falsehood, or open disobedience,—to baffle his watchfulness, and escape his severity. It cannot be too strong to say, that this is at least so far the case, as far as regards the general business of schools; the boys' interest and pleasure are supposed to consist in contriving to have as little work as they can, the master's in putting on as much as he can;—a strange and sad state of feeling, which must have arisen, I fear, from the habit of keeping out of sight the relation in which we both stand, masters and boys alike, to our common Master in heaven; and that it is his service which we all have, after our several stations, to labour in. A due sense of our common service to our heavenly Master is inculcated by St. Paul as softening even the hardships of slavery,—although it is the peculiar curse of that wretched system, that the power is there exercised, not

for the good of the governed, but for that of the governor. It is not for his own good, but for the interest merely of his master, that any man is a slave. But our relation to one another, like that of children and parents, is a relation chiefly for your good: it is for your benefit that the restraints of education are intended,—that you may be good, and wise, and happy, in after years, and may bring forth fruit from the seed here sown, which may endure unto life eternal. And this you would all at once acknowledge, if it were not for the old school feeling handed down from one generation to another, and growing out of a system too neglectful of Christian principles, or too fearful of openly professing them. This veil over the heart and understanding, this fatal prejudice, this evil error, like every thing else false, ignorant, and wicked, can only be done away in Christ. When you shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; and you will be enabled to see clearly your true condition here, what we are endeavouring to make it, and how entirely our objects and interests are the same as your own.

SERMON XIII.

LUKE XIV. 24.—*None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

It is perfectly true, that the first and immediate meaning of these words relates to the Jews as a nation. They declare, that the people who were first called into the kingdom of God, were to be cast out of it altogether, because they had refused to obey the call. It certainly does first relate to the Jews; but this is not the meaning in which it concerns us now to attend to it. But as the threatenings and promises of the Old Testament are said by St. Paul to apply to Christians, who were, by faith, become the children of Abraham, and partakers of the covenant for good and for evil; so the warning parables of our Lord, in the New Testament, apply to us, and to our children after us: and it is the wisdom of every successive generation to understand them as referring not to the sins and follies of their fathers, but to their own.

Therefore, the parable of the "marriage supper" should be understood as relating to ourselves. But even thus it is capable of being applied in more than one signification. You may have often heard sermons preached upon

it, in which the marriage supper in the parable was understood of the sacrament of the Lord's supper: and the excuses made by the several persons in the story, for refusing to come when they were invited, have been compared with the various excuses so often made amongst us, for refusing to obey Christ's call to the holy communion. And this is a very sound and useful way of making the parable profitable to our own edification. I am going, however, to take it now in rather a different sense; not as relating particularly to the communion, but generally as it expresses these following points, in the dealings of God with them:—first, his calling them to their own true happiness, and giving them a season wherein the doors of his mercy stand freely open to them: secondly, the obstinacy with which they neglect this call, and like any thing else better:—and thirdly, the great punishment which they incur, being after a time utterly shut out from happiness, and being placed in a far worse state than if the call had never been made to them at the beginning.

Still, while taking thus the general principle of the parable, it would be unwise not to illustrate it by the peculiar circumstances of those who hear me. One congregation is not like another; and it seems to me, that we should choose, as far as possible, such points to dwell upon, as our hearers may feel not only to

concern themselves, but to concern themselves particularly. God's call to you, therefore, is not exactly the same as it is to others; your reasons for not listening to it are not exactly the same with the reasons of others; and although the final punishment of disobedience be indeed the same to all, yet the more immediate and earthly one is different, inasmuch as it varies according to the particular nature of that good thing which God offered, and which we declined to accept.

God's call, addressed to the soul of every man, is a call to him to be happy for ever; and this is the same thing as calling upon him to be holy, for holiness and happiness are one in God, and they are one also in the children of God. Holiness in God's creatures consists in their drawing near to God, and becoming like unto Him. No man hath seen God, however, at any time;—but the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, man has seen: and although now we, in this generation, see Him no longer with our bodily eyes, yet with the story of his life and character handed down to us from those who did see and hear Him, and with his Spirit ever dwelling amongst us, and revealing Him to all those who desire Him, we do, for all practical purposes, see and know him still. To be like Christ, then, is to be like God: he who has the image of the Son, the same has also the image of the Father. Now in Christ, the main point

of imitation to us is this, that in all things He did the will of Him who sent Him, and laboured to finish his work. This He began from boyhood, and in this He persevered even till that moment when all was accomplished, and He resigned his Spirit into the hands of his Father on the cross. To Him, God's call was to be the Great Prophet of his people, to go about doing good, to teach them the knowledge of the Most High, to prepare men's minds for that kingdom of heaven, which by his blood was to be purchased, and preached to all mankind. This was to Him, so far as He was man, God's special call;—for his death, as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, belongs to his nature as He was both God and man: and here, therefore, there is no place for our imitation. As, then, Christ laboured all his life, beginning in his boyhood, to obey God's special call to Him, so we can best imitate Christ by labouring all our lives to obey God's special call to us. Now this call is made known to us, not by a miracle, nor by a voice from heaven; but partly by the circumstances of our age and outward condition, and partly by the different faculties and dispositions of our minds. For instance, your youth points out to you one especial call of God, to obey your parents and teachers, and to improve yourselves for the duties which you will hereafter have to perform as men. And your outward circum-

stances, your birth and condition in life, point out to you another especial call of God ;—that is, they point out to you what particular duties you will have hereafter to perform, and what sort of improvement is particularly required of you. Generally, to all young persons, God's call is to improve themselves ; but what particular sort of improvement He calls you to, that you may learn from the station of life in which He has placed you. If you were born in a station in which you would be called upon to work chiefly with your hands hereafter, then the strengthening of your bodies, the learning to be active and handy, to be bold and enduring of bodily pain and labour, would be your special duty, over and above that common duty of love to God and to man, which belongs to every age and every condition alike. But, as it is, you will be called upon to work chiefly with your minds hereafter : and although it be very true, that the mind works but feebly when the body is sickly ; and that, therefore, you are called upon, like all other persons, to make yourselves, as far as you can, strong and active, and healthful and patient in your bodies ; yet your especial call is rather to improve your minds, because it is with your minds that God calls upon you to work hereafter. And for the younger part of you, I need not go any further than this ; for the particular calling in which you will have to

work with your minds,—I mean the particular profession or situation of life which you are to fill,—can hardly yet be fixed: and at any rate, you are yet too young to begin your professional course of studies, and your business is to attend to those studies which are pointed out for you, as likely to be useful generally to your understandings, be your profession hereafter what it may.

But some of you are old enough to inquire what is God's call to you, as to the choice of a profession; that is to say, what course of duty is pointed out to you by the particular dispositions and faculties of your minds. It is very true, that this choice does not always rest with yourselves: it is true, also, that you cannot yet fully judge of what your faculties may hereafter ripen to, nor how habit may make your inclinations conform to what now you may feel most strongly to dislike. These are circumstances, which naturally point out to you the benefit of listening to the greater experience of others, and not deciding for yourselves alone. But, although you should not judge for yourselves absolutely, and in defiance of the advice of others, yet it does become you, earnestly and carefully, to look into your own hearts and minds, to observe, so far as you can, what your character is, what is its strength, and what its weakness; what are its intellectual faculties,

and what its moral tendencies ; what faults it is most prone to, and what duties it seems best fitted successfully to perform. Few parents would refuse to listen to their son, when he laid before them the results of his own best inquiries into his own heart and mind, and accordingly represented his greater fitness for one particular calling, his greater unfitness for another. Nay, every wise parent would rejoice and be thankful to see his son thus opening his character before him, and furnishing him with the knowledge by which he could best judge what was best for him.

Undoubtedly, it is a solemn deliberation in what line of life God calls upon us to serve Him ; and we know this, that it is beginning with most evil omens, if we enter upon any profession or way of living, to which we cannot humbly believe that He has called us. Family convenience, prospects of preferment, must not outweigh higher considerations ; and this applies, especially to that most solemn of all callings, and in which, above all others, worldly well-doing in it may be quite independent of the fitness of our hearts and minds for the discharge of its duties. A young man of very low understanding is not likely to be called upon by his friends, or tempted by his own inclination to enter upon the profession of the law :—a young man of a feeble body and a weak spirit,

unapt, both in body and mind, to encounter toil and danger, will not often wish, or be wished by his friends to go into the army or navy. But how many do we see every day, who are wished, and who consent readily, to enter into Christ's spiritual warfare, to become ministers of Christ's Gospel, while their minds are wholly disinclined to heavenly knowledge, and their hearts without any relish for heavenly love! This, assuredly, is an entering into the sheepfold by another way than by Christ, the door; it is a taking charge of the sheep, with the selfish feelings of the hireling, not with the zeal and affection of the good Shepherd.

But you are young yet, and you may hope, that before the time comes when you will actually enter on the ministry, you may have gained that desire to know and to do God's will, and to save the souls of others, which as yet you cannot pretend to feel. Then, if you have this hope, do your best to realize it; if you think that God does call you into his service, live as worthy of that call: at school and at the University, if your friends' wishes, and your own, prepare you to enter hereafter into the ministry, see that you regard yourselves as vessels fashioned to honour, and to be preserved especially pure and bright, for our heavenly Master's use. If you do so regard yourselves, and so strive to fit yourselves for your heavenly

profession, it may be, and I trust will, that in the call of outward circumstances, and the wishes of your friends, you may hereafter recognize the true call of God.

Thus, then, God calls you, at your age especially, to improve yourselves in the studies placed before you, and to consider in yourselves how you may best serve Him hereafter, and in what particular way you may fit yourselves for his call to your several professions. The answer which you give to this call of God, and the punishment to which you render yourselves liable, will be the subject of my next sermon.

SERMON XIV.

LUKE XIV. 18.—*They all with one consent began to make excuse.*

So perfect is the truth of those descriptions of our nature which are to be found in the Scriptures; so entirely do they seize those principal points which are applicable to all times and to all countries; that when we quote them in reference to the common circumstances of our daily life, the effect is almost startling; and it seems almost like an irreverent use of them, to bring them so closely in contact with our ordinary language and practices. But the fact is, that this wonderful capability of being brought home to common life, constitutes a great part of their perpetual value. The parable in the text was spoken immediately with reference to the various reasons which made the Jews in that day refuse God's call to enter into the kingdom of his Son. Yet so much is human nature the same from one age to another, and so exactly does the parable describe this nature, that the words of the text may just as fitly be applied to ourselves. "They all with one consent began to make excuse." In which I shall

note two things : first, the disobedience to the call of God ; and then, the tendency to make excuses for that disobedience, by which, in fact, we condemn ourselves.

In my last sermon, I spoke of that particular call of God which is here addressed to you. We have all of us here assembled, our particular call relating to the several duties which our respective situations impose upon us. Do we not all of us too often refuse to listen to this call, and then make our disobedience worse by the vain excuses which we plead for it? I proceed to explain what I mean more particularly.

That the call is disobeyed is a matter of fact, of which our consciences cannot pretend to be ignorant. You are not fitting yourselves carefully and humbly for that state to which it may please God to call you ; you are too many of you not bringing up to godliness and good learning. But the nature of excuses given for not being so is well worthy of our consideration. I do not mean that these excuses are given outwardly to other persons ; perhaps you would be ashamed so to state them : but they are, at any rate, excuses with which you cheat yourselves, and your own consciences, and remain satisfied with not doing what God requires of you.

One of these excuses arises out of a feeling that your common work is not a matter of

religion; and that, therefore, it is not sinful to neglect it. Idleness and vice are considered as two distinct things; and it is very common to say, and to hear it said of such an one, that he is idle, but that he is perfectly free from vice. It would, indeed, be using words contrary to their common meaning, if we did not make this distinction; and it is true also, that a vicious boy is a great deal worse than an idle one, because he sins much more directly against his own conscience, and because, after all, it is worse to do evil than to leave good undone. But what is not vicious may yet be sinful; in other words, what is not a great offence against men's common notions of right and wrong, may yet be a very great one against those purer motives which we learn from the Scripture, and in the judgment of the most pure God. Thus idleness is not vicious, perhaps, but it is certainly sinful, and to strive against it is a religious duty, because it is highly offensive to God. This is so clearly shown in the parable of the ten talents, in that of the sower and the seed, and even in the account of the day of judgment, given by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, that it cannot require a very long proof. In the parable of the talents, the whole offence of the servant, who is cast out into outer darkness, consists in his not having made the most of the talent intrusted to him:

in the parable of the sower, those soils are alike represented as bad, "which bring no fruit to perfection," whether the ground be overrun with thorns and briers, or whether it fail to produce anything, from its mere shallowness and lightness. And in the description of the day of judgment, the sin for which the wicked are represented as turned into hell, is only that they had done no good. It is not mentioned that they were vicious in the common sense of the word; but they were sinful inasmuch as they had not done what God commanded them to do. And if it be said that this relates to the improvement of the heart rather than of the understanding, and that though it may be a sin to neglect deeds of charity, it does not follow that it should be a sin to neglect working at books and tasks; the answer is that it relates to neglecting the main duty of our lives, be it of whatever nature it may. If your principal work be of a different kind, show what it is, and let the fruit of it be seen; and if your lives are actively useful, if you are labouring in God's service heartily, and if study be taken up merely as a recreation, as the amusement of your leisure hours,—then I do not deny but that very great ignorance and dislike to study may be faults of a much lighter character; it may be foolish rather than sinful to indulge them. But as it is plain that you have no other prin-

cial duty but that of improving your minds,—as you have no other way in which you can bring forth fruit,—so it is plain, that to neglect this in you is the same sort of sin as if a king were to neglect the care of his people, or a minister of Christ the spiritual benefit of the congregation committed to his charge: the ground does not bring forth the fruit which the sower looks for; and it is, therefore, rejected and judged unprofitable.

Another excuse more nearly resembles the excuses made by the men in the parable;—you do not attend to the call of God, because there is some other call which you like better. You complain, or rather you say to yourselves, that the work is very irksome to you, and you cannot see the use of it. It is likely enough that the work is irksome; for so corrupt is our nature, that God's will is generally irksome to us, because He is good and we are evil. The cultivation of your understandings is irksome to you: and be assured that you will find hereafter the cultivation of your spirits quite as irksome: neither the labours, indeed, of the body or the mind, can be compared to the long and painful struggles with our bad passions and moral corruptions,—with our pride, our lust, our covetousness, our worldly-mindedness. In doing God's will, and striving to purify ourselves from these, there is enough that is irksome, and ever will

be, to our natural inclinations and feelings. But is this such an excuse as God will allow for not doing what He has commanded us? Is it not here, rather, that we should learn to practise our Saviour's command—"Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me?" What is denying ourselves, but doing what we do not like, because it is the will of our Master? What is to take up our cross daily, but to find and to bear daily some difficulty or other, some hindrance in ourselves or others, which besets and would close up our path of duty? But it may be said, and said truly, that we cannot go on for ever doing what is irksome to us; that we may try for a time, but to continue such painful efforts is absolutely impossible. It is so,—and what, then, is the consequence of this truth? The Apostle's words will tell us: "That which the law could not do, because it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He means, that the love of Christ, and the aid of his Spirit, make us able to do what of ourselves we could not do, because they help us to love what by nature we esteem, but do not love. We all know, and some may remember the beautiful words in which the

heathen poet¹ has expressed the fact, that love makes the hardest task easy. Even so, he who loves God and Christ, finds in himself a stronger motive to please Him than his natural dislike to what is good: and though the struggle never ceases altogether till the day of the redemption of our bodies, yet the victory is no longer with sin, but with grace. The natural evil inclination, the weak and corrupt flesh, still finds duty painful; but the regenerate Spirit, born again of the Spirit of God, and sharing in its Father's likeness, finds the will of its Father more pleasant than the flesh feels it painful: and so the will of God is done, and the man is redeemed from the bondage of sin and misery. This is the case with one duty as well as with another: whatever we have to do at God's call, which we find irksome to us, it is by the love of Christ, and by the help of his Spirit, that we shall find the pleasure greater than the pain. Therefore, against idleness, no less than against other sins, the Christian has the only sure means of victory: and he who lives without God in the world, cannot be surprised, if he finds his natural inclinations to evil too strong for any lower motives to conquer. Thus much for the excuse

¹ σκληρὰν μὲν, οἶδα, παῖδες· ἀλλ' ἐν γὰρ μόνον
τὰ πάντα λύει ταῦτ' ἔπος μοχθήματα·
τὸ γὰρ φιλεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐξ ὅτου πλέον
ἢ τοῦδε τάνδρὸς ἔσχεθ', κ. τ. λ.

Sophocles, Œd. Colon. v. 1615.

of the irksomeness of your school duties: do them earnestly, and pray for God's help, and think what Christ has done for you, and what he promises to you; and you will find that if idleness be sweet, the pleasure of doing the will of God, and keeping the commandments of Christ, is sweeter.

But you may say also, that you do not see the use of the work which you are employed in. This, too, is very likely; and, indeed, few but the oldest amongst you, or those endowed with the strongest natural abilities, and who have most carefully cultivated them, are capable as yet of seeing it. When our missionaries first introduced wheat into some of the South-sea islands, the natives, who had been accustomed to get all their fruit from the roots of plants, and in a much quicker time than that in which wheat ripens, began with great curiosity, after a certain time, to pluck up the corn, thinking that the root from which they doubted not but that the promised bread was to come, must, by this time, be quite ready to dig up. But when they found nothing at the root, and were told that they must wait some time longer, and would get their bread, after all, not from the root, but from a few little seeds, which, when ripe, must be ground into flour,—the thing was wholly beyond their comprehension; and nothing but their strong faith in the superior knowledge and experience of the missionaries,

prevented them from pulling up the whole crop, as occupying the ground uselessly. So it is with the fruit of your studies here: it neither shows itself so soon as you expect, nor is it, after all, of the kind that you can now most readily understand; so that all that can be said to you is, work on in faith, as you must hereafter, even to the end of your lives, live by faith. Believe the experience and knowledge of others, who have lived to see the harvest, and who know and most deeply feel its virtue. But so far is true, that the fruit of your studies here will be absolutely nothing,—that the time spent upon them will be utterly lost,—if you do not exert yourselves heartily, and enter into them with spirit. Nothing can be so useless as the peculiar studies of this place, if done in a bondman's temper; if attended to only so far as you must; if learnt as lessons, with no efforts of your own to understand and enter into them. As I believe that nothing is more truly profitable to those who do enter into them thoroughly, so I am sure that nothing is a more complete waste of time to those who follow them carelessly, and take no pains of themselves about them.

But the subject seems as yet far from exhausted: for another, and a more common and more fatal excuse for neglecting God's call, still remains to be spoken of. Meanwhile, before I conclude for the present, one caution is most needful, not for yourselves only, but for us also.

It is impossible that you or we should be obeying Christ's call, if we neglect our peculiar duties here—the following up your studies diligently on your part, the directing and assisting them actively and zealously on ours. But it is very possible that both you and we should attend zealously to these duties, and yet not be obeying Christ's call either. Irksome as the studies of the school are to many, there are some well capable of enjoying them,—there are some who can share with us in the pleasures of extended knowledge, in the delights of an active exercise of the understanding. You too, and we, are liable to feel the excitement of praise and distinction; academical honours, and a high reputation, are objects sufficiently tempting to all of us. God grant that they may not be a snare to us,—that we may not make an idol of talent or knowledge,—that we may not desire to be clever, learned, and distinguished, rather than wise and good. I am sure that this is a danger against which we should pray earnestly, and watch carefully,—lest the fruit which we are rearing, like the fabled apples of Sodom, turn in our touch to rottenness. May God grant that we may feel all this, and, whatever progress we may make, that we may consider it as worse than useless if it beguiles us from our Christian watchfulness, our dread of sin, and counting all things but loss in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!

SERMON XV.

MATT. X. 36.—*A man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

IN my last sermon I spoke of two of those excuses which you sometimes make to your own consciences, for not obeying the particular call which God here addresses to you. And I then said, that there yet remained another excuse, more common than the rest, and far more mischievous, which I proposed to consider on another occasion. It is, indeed, an excuse which is one of the strongest supports of the cause of Satan, an excuse which will never be laid aside till sin and death are put down for ever: and, indeed, if it did cease to influence men's minds, earth would be at once changed into something almost heavenly; the greatest part of the wickedness which infests it would be done away with altogether. I mean, that excuse by which we either plead the example and authority of our neighbours for our doing evil; or, for fear of their laughing at us and persecuting us, leave off to do good, and become even ashamed of appearing to care for it. In this state it may be well said, that "a man's foes will be they of his own household;" that nothing is so dangerous to his salvation as the principles and practice of other men with whom

he is living in daily intercourse; nothing so much to be feared, as that he should make their opinions his standard, instead of the declared will of God.

This is a subject on which I have spoken often before, and on which I may speak often again. I know not, indeed, to what congregation a Christian minister could make frequent addresses, without finding it expedient to dwell upon this most besetting danger: I am sure that here it might be made the daily subject of our warnings to you, and yet not be mentioned too frequently. It is not too much to say, that scarcely a single day ever passes without my seeing some instance of its fatal power: every day I observe some wickedness, or low principle or other, for which the ever-ready excuse would be, that every one else says or does the same. In proportion, therefore, to the strength and commonness of this feeling, must be the frequency and earnestness of my attacks upon it: as you are, too many of you, the veriest slaves of each other's opinions, the veriest imitators of each other's conduct, so I must try to rouse you to something of a more independent feeling, and to break through that bondage, which may most properly be called the bondage of sin and death.

Nothing, I suppose, shows the weakness of human nature more than this perpetual craving

after some guide and support out of itself,—this living upon the judgment of others rather than on our own. And it is not to be disputed but that we do need a guide and support out of ourselves, if we would but choose the right one. All the idolatry in the world grew out of a just sense of human weakness: men looked at themselves and at the world around them; they felt how little they were, and by how much greatness they were surrounded; they saw how their bodies and their minds, their friends and their property, all the several elements of their happiness, were subjected to the control of causes wholly above their power to resist; and they turned, in their blindness, to worship every thing from whose influence upon their condition, whether for good or for evil, they had any thing to hope or to fear. This is the early form of idolatry, from the worship of the most glorious of God's creatures—the sun, and the moon, and the stars, to that of the vilest objects which have ever received the homage of a degraded superstition. But, in time, the progress of knowledge destroys this kind of idolatry, by explaining the causes of the most wonderful operations of nature, which men had hitherto regarded with ignorant fear or wonder. Images of brass, and wood, and stone,—the sun and all the host of heaven,—are adored no longer: but the sense of human weakness still presses upon us, and,

averse as we are to turning to our true Guide and Guardian, we only change the nature of our idolatry, and become idolaters of our fellow-men. Before their influence we bow down as blindly as our fathers did before their images of stone. But it is an influence far more mischievous, because it is a real one: men can express opinions, and enforce them; can encourage the pursuit of some objects, and chill all fondness for others; they can largely affect the happiness of our lives. Of this idol of civilized life its worshippers are apt to say, "Lo, he liveth, he eateth, and drinketh: thou canst not say that he is no living God: therefore worship him." They would persuade us, indeed, that there is no power in the universe so real; none which may so justly deserve our hopes and our fears. And we may think so, perhaps truly, if we once forget the Lord our God: for the mass of mankind cannot enter into the high feeling of the old philosophers; and if the divinity of our own minds were one that we might safely in any case worship, yet in too many instances the mind is so feeble, so little possessed of any attribute of divinity, that it were worse than madness to lean on a staff so rotten.

I hold it, therefore, to be certain, that in our days, and for the bulk of mankind, there is a choice of only two things: they must worship God, or one another; they must seek the praise

and favour of God above all things, or the praise and favour of man. Being too weak to stand alone, they must lean upon the Rock of Ages, or upon the perishing and treacherous pillar of human opinion. This is the case with men; and this, in an equal, or even in a greater degree, is the case with you.

But the evil here is particularly great, because the standard of excellence here approved of is so exceedingly false and low. It would be curious to gather and to record the several points in a character which boys respect and admire, in order to show what a crooked rule they walk by. In the true scale of excellence, moral perfection is most highly valued, then comes excellence of understanding, and, last of all, strength and activity of body. But at school this is just reversed. A strong and active boy is very much respected; a clever boy is also admired:—but a good and well-principled boy meets with very little encouragement. Again, natural abilities are admired and valued; but it is the tendency of many persons to admire them much less when united with sound sense and industry, than when they are to be found in one who does not cultivate them, but abuses them by his indolence, or by converting them to some purpose of wickedness or folly. It is indeed remarkable, that no where else is the habitual breach of our duty so countenanced as it is here.

A soldier, who was notoriously idle and cowardly, would not only be punished by his superiors, but would be an object of dislike and contempt to his comrades themselves. So it is with workmen: if a man works ill and lazily, it is not the way to gain credit with his companions any more than his employer. And this is but a natural feeling,—that it is disgraceful to do our business ill, let it be of what kind it may; that it is contemptible either to be doing nothing, or to have an employment, and to neglect it. But here, on the contrary, idleness is with many rather a glory, and industry is considered as a reproach. When a boy first comes from home, full of the natural desire of doing his duty, of improving himself, and getting on well, he is presently beset by the ridicule of all the worthless and foolish boys around him, who want to sink him to their own level. How completely true is it, that his foes are they of his own household!—that is, they who are most immediately about him, those of his own age, and his own place in the school. They become his idol; before their most foolish, most low, and most wicked voices, he gives up his affections, his understanding, and his conscience; from this mass of ignorance, and falsehood, and selfishness, he looks for the guide of his opinions and his conduct. The strong language of scorn, with which the prophet describes the idolatry of old,

may well be applied to this no less foolish and no less wicked idolatry of our own days: "He burneth part thereof in the fire, with part thereof he baketh bread, and the residue he maketh a god, even his graven image. A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" So it may be said of you,—You know what the idol is that you worship: you know how ignorant, how selfish, how unkind, often how false and how mean, are those boys whose ridicule you fear, and whose applause you covet. You know that in sickness or in affliction, they are not the persons to whom you would go for comfort: you know, if you were to commit any offence against their notions of right and wrong, how little allowance they would make for you, how little compassion they would show for your distress. And yet, for the sake of the good opinion of persons such as these, or in order to avoid their ridicule, you would struggle to overcome your own best affections, you would harden your conscience, distress and displease your dearest earthly friends, and grieve the Spirit of God, who calls you to a better mind. You are bound by this fatal chain, "A deceived heart hath turned you aside, so that you cannot deliver your souls, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Am I not sacrificing my happiness in earth and heaven to a lying spirit, which calls

evil good, and good evil: which puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter?

But where the terror of ridicule does not act to make you do what you know to be wrong, yet the low standard of right and wrong which exists among you is sometimes mischievous to those, who in many respects think and act above it, by furnishing them with an excuse for indulging occasionally in some convenient but unworthy practice. It is then so natural an excuse to deceive our conscience, that we are but doing what every one else does, that we are but doing what no one else considers to be wrong. We make it a sort of merit, that in general we do follow a higher standard; and, on the strength of this, we think ourselves entitled to follow the lower one sometimes, when we are particularly tempted to do so. I could imagine, that St. James had had much experience of people of this description, from several passages in his epistle. Those double-minded men, whom he bids to purify their hearts, and whom he tells not to think that they shall receive any thing of the Lord; those whom he reminds, that “to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin;”—they apparently were persons who lived in general far above the heathen standard, who only wished to keep in reserve some few convenient points on which they might gratify their evil inclinations,

and say in their excuse, that no one else thought there was any harm in such things. They thought and knew that there was harm in them, for their eyes had been opened by Gospel light, and they would be judged by their own knowledge, and not by their neighbour's ignorance. Vain, therefore, is the attempt to serve God and mammon together; to reconcile the low standard of your companions with that purer and higher one with which it has been your happiness to be made acquainted—your happiness, if not almost only but altogether you become conformed to it; or else, not your happiness, but your certain and most just condemnation.

One thing in which this low standard fearfully shows itself, I cannot but take this occasion of mentioning. I have observed, from time to time, that the sin of falsehood is not considered among you so hateful as Christ teaches us to regard it; or even as the common notions of worldly honour, in this respect most true in their judgment, estimate it amongst men in the world. It is really awful to witness the quantity of direct falsehood, of equivocation, unfair concealment, false representations, and all the train of similar wickedness, of which too many of you continually allow yourselves to be guilty. Your aim seems to be, not to tell the truth, but to steer dexterously between the truth and a lie.

And this is as foolish as it is wicked. It is impossible to steer between them: for he who once allows himself any other object than the truth,—who suffers himself to try to make his neighbour believe something which is not exactly the real fair state of the case,—is already a liar in his heart. The real guilt of falsehood consists in the attempt to disguise the truth; that is, to deceive: and it matters not by what form of words this object is effected; whether it be by equivocating, or concealing, or misrepresenting, or by direct lying. It is the truth that God loves, and which is the peculiar glory of the Gospel; insomuch that St. Paul twice notices, as the first mark of a converted heart, that, putting away lying, we should “speak every one truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.” And this you are all taught at home: from your earliest childhood you have known the wickedness of falsehood, the duty of absolute sincerity and truth. But here you find another standard, which tells you that it is fair to deceive and lie to serve your own turn, at least when you are speaking to a master. You let this false standard lead you away from your duty to God and man; you make it your idol, and fall down and worship it, and sacrifice to it every thing that ought to be most precious, even your own souls which Christ died to save.

For a short time, this fatal spell will now be taken off from you; for a few weeks you will breathe in a purer air, and be subjected, I trust, to a gentler and holier influence. Some, nay, many, and I hope most of you will see in your own homes examples of a very different kind; will hear there a very different language from what they have seen and heard around them here. The evil spirit will leave his hold for a time, and you may breathe and speak in freedom. But remember that he will surely return again: a few short weeks, and we shall be met here once more, and the same temptations will be again besetting you. Would that you would use the precious interval that is now granted to you! Would that some of you, whose principles have been somewhat stained, and their practice corrupted, during the last five months, may purify yourselves from these soils; may refresh and strengthen your fainting spirits with a new draught of the well of everlasting life! And I will add our Lord's solemn words to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." If Satan has desired to have you, and if his desire has been in part fulfilled,—if you have been tempted, like Peter, to deny your Saviour,—yet that same Saviour, who prayed

for Peter, prays for you also, that your faith may not fail finally. Remember, too, and strive that his last words also may apply to you—"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." You are not called to an inactive state; you cannot serve Christ in secret, when his enemies are loud in denying Him. You must confess Him before men, even at the risk of being put out of the synagogue; that is, of being laughed or reviled out of their society. Still you must confess him, and not be ashamed of his Gospel. But yet there is a comfort for you, that may lawfully encourage you. They who were put out of the synagogue, who were persecuted and reviled everywhere for preaching the Gospel of Christ; they lived to see the day when the kingdom of Christ was greatly multiplied, and the synagogue of the Jews sunk before it. What if this be, in part at least, your case; if, by firmness, by union amongst yourselves,—(for they who feared the Lord, in the midst of wickedness, were wont to speak often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it,)—by patient continuance in well-doing, and by a Christian prudence, teaching you not to disfigure your profession by any needless severity, or by folly,—you could not only save yourselves from being corrupted, but turn back the torrent of evil upon itself, and win others from the service of Satan to join

with you? What, if owing to your efforts, always in the strength, and with your sole trust in your Saviour's aid, it should be no more reckoned excusable to lie or to equivocate, no more thought honourable to be idle, no more thought poor-spirited to walk stedfastly in the path of duty? Even this is not beyond hope, if we all of us here assembled, who do love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,—you in your station, and your teachers in theirs,—labour, with all holy diligence, to advance Christ's kingdom. But if not,—if this be denied you,—and if you must still have to struggle against triumphant evil,—still remember whose arm will never fail you, and think of that hour when the triumph will surely be your own to all eternity. Think of the blessedness of being confessed by Christ before his Father, and the holy angels, because you in the world had confessed Him. Think of the glory of receiving such praise as the most sublime of poets has expressed, in a strain not surely uninspired by that “Eternal Spirit” whose aid he had sincerely sought—

“Servant of God? well done! well hast thou fought
 The better fight, who singly has maintain'd
 Against revolted multitudes the cause
 Of Truth, in word mightier than they in arms:
 And, for the testimony of truth, hast borne
 Universal reproach, far worse to bear
 Than violence:—for this was all thy care,
 To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
 Judged thee perverse.”

SERMON XVI.

JOHN XIII. 13, 14.—*Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye ought also to wash one another's feet.*

OF all the words and actions of our Lord that have been recorded in the Gospels, there is none, perhaps, more remarkable, none more unlike every other system of morals with which we are acquainted, than the action alluded to in the text. It was done deliberately and purposely for our instruction ; to leave us a lesson of a particular kind, such as Christ well knew that we most needed. Indeed, it is a lesson which we all need, the old and the young alike ; we need it at every time of life, we need it at every age of the world, we need it in every condition of society : but yet, if there be one period of life, one age of the world, one country, and one particular condition, in which it be particularly wanted, I may say with truth that yours is that period of life, and that ours is that age of the world, that country, and that condition.

Some of you have heard me, on other occasions, dwell on the fearful contrast between the effects which Christianity ought to have produced, and which are spoken of in Scripture as

its natural consequences, and those which have actually flowed from it. Our Saviour said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one towards another." This love of one another was to be the mark and seal of Christians; it was to distinguish them from other men; so that those who were not Christians, looking upon their lives, and seeing them free from the jealousies, the quarrels, the violent and bad passions of other men, might confess that God was in them of a truth, and that so heavenly a fruit could proceed from nothing else than the tree of life eternal. Now, if we look through history, or if, without going to books, we look round upon our own neighbourhood,—nay, even if we come still closer home, and look round our own household, upon those with whom we eat and drink daily at the same table,—nay, if, coming nearer still, we look upon our very own relations, the parents, the wives and husbands, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, between whom love might surely be expected to reign,—what is the sight that we shall witness? But better and more fitting is it to look into one place which will speak more clearly and certainly to us than all the rest: let us each look into our own hearts, and ask our consciences what we find there. Alas, my brethren, if he only dwelleth in God who dwelleth in love, surely we are not in God,

nor God in us. Even the kindest and most benevolent of us all, they in whom, to the eyes of others, nothing ungentle, nothing uncharitable is visible,—even with them the heart knoweth his own bitterness; they know—and God, who is greater than their heart, knoweth also—how much that is harsh, and selfish, and violent, and unkind, mingles itself with their inmost spirit; how far they are distant from that perfect love with which God loved us, and with which we ought also to love one another.

But the text speaks of one particular kind of love more especially,—the love of our poorer brethren. It must have been a solemn lesson which our Lord chose to teach so earnestly on that last night of his presence with his disciples; and which He not only gave in words, but expressed it in a most significant action, to impress it the deeper on their minds and ours. Observe the connexion of the words of the Evangelist: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God:” what did He upon this knowledge? did He reveal to them some high mysteries concerning the divine nature, such as kings, and prophets, and sages had long desired to learn? No: “he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’

feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." This was what Jesus did, "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God." Surely no diviner comment could be given upon the words of the Scriptures, that "God is love, and he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!" A command so given and so enforced, must surely have been of the deepest importance. "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet."

I call this text a command to one particular kind of love, "the love of our poorer brethren." It is sometimes said, that it was a command to practise humility: and so it was in one sense of the word; but they who so explain it, deprive it of a great portion of its peculiar value. Our Lord taught humility, in the common sense of the term, when He took a child, and set him in the midst of his disciples, and said, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." But it is manifest that by washing his disciples' feet, and telling them that they ought also to wash one another's feet, he did not mean exactly the same thing as this. His meaning was, to enforce not so much a sacrifice of pride, as of luxurious and careless selfishness; to teach us to do, not those things which it was humiliating,

but which it was troublesome, unpleasant, and disagreeable to do ; that is, precisely, to perform duties of kindness, even of the most humble sort, to those who need them the most ; not to shrink from the meanest offices in visiting and relieving the bodily wants and sufferings of the poor.

If there were nothing else, I am sure that the unwillingness with which we hear this command, and our anxiety to fix another meaning to it, would alone show how much we require it. It is, too, I am sure, particularly needed by us who are here assembled. The duties of attending on sickness are so much more familiar to women, even of every condition, and there is so much more of the kindness required for them in woman's nature than in man's, that it is our own sex in particular, and, above all, our own station in society, that needs this lesson. To us the abodes of the poor, and still more their sickbeds, are a sight with which we are but little acquainted : in fact, our knowledge of the poor, that is, of the largest portion of our Christian brethren living immediately around us, is next to nothing. And it is chiefly from this ignorance, I think, that our feelings and relations towards the poor altogether are so thoroughly unchristian. You well know how early you learn to call every one belonging to the poorer classes by a contemptuous name, by which you distinguish them

from those belonging to the richer classes. It is very true that all who use this name do not intend any insult by it; they use it without thinking of its meaning, just as men commonly swear and use profane language, without meaning or considering what they are saying. Yet, as no man of habitual piety will be found to swear, so I am inclined to think that no one who felt a Christian kindness towards the poor, who lived in the painful recollection of what they were, and what he himself was, would ever speak of them by that insulting name to which I have alluded. And be assured of this, that our words have an insensible but certain effect upon our feelings, even when used most carelessly. From always hearing the poor spoken of, from always speaking of them yourselves by this name, you get habitually to think meanly of them, to look upon them almost as a different race, between whom and yourselves there is a wide gulf fixed, so wide as to cut off all sympathy. Meantime, those of the poor with whom you do become personally acquainted, are persons of whom you cannot but think meanly, although you ought to consider how much of what you despise in them is merely owing to your own encouragement. If I were to go through a list of the most respectable poor families in this place, few of you, I am afraid, would know any thing about them; but if I were to name those persons

who are least respectable, your knowledge of them, I fear, would be far more intimate. So again I have been more than once struck by observing how much eagerness many of you have shown in giving things to beggars, evidently of the very most undeserving sort, because they amused you by their tricks and buffoonery ; while the same hands, which were so lavish to the worthless, had, perhaps, never learnt to relieve the real necessities of the honest and uncomplaining. Nor let it be thought that these are little things, unfit to be spoken of in the house of God. It is a most vain superstition, and most mischievous, as all superstition ever is, to think that the mention of little common things is unworthy of this holy place, when out of these little things our hearts and lives are daily forming into a fitness for eternal happiness or eternal misery. The things of which I have now spoken,—that contemptuous word by which you call the poor,—that want of acquaintance with the respectable among them,—that familiarity with the profligate,—that encouragement given to the idler who makes beggary his trade,—that neglect of those real sufferers, in whose persons Christ Himself vouchsafes to ask our charity ; all these things help to form that disposition towards the poor in after life, from which our country is at this moment so fearfully suffering. It is not hard-heartedness,—much

less is it wilful oppression,—but it is an absence of that true feeling of Christian brotherhood which Christ's words in my text inculcate: “Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you ought also to wash one another's feet.” It is those little words, “one another,” which express so much, and which we are so apt to lose sight of. These words show, that the rich and the poor are members one of another, not two distinct castes,—I had almost said two distinct races. These words ought to take away that feeling of merit which we are but too apt to attach to our charity. No man is proud of being kind to his brother or his near friend; he would only be ashamed of himself if he were not kind. So, if we felt aright to the poor, that they are, in the highest of all relations, our brethren—children of the same heavenly Father, called all alike brethren by Him who, having taken part of our flesh and blood, was not ashamed to call all God's earthly children by that name; if we so felt, should we not, indeed, think that the words, “one another,” might well describe the relations of the rich and the poor; should we not fully enter into the spirit of the Apostle's words: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another?”

But, in conclusion, I must remember that

after hearing all that I have said, the practical question may yet be asked, "What must we do? How can we, each of us, bring home to ourselves the lesson which Christ teaches us?" You can do it, by leaving off what is contrary to it, at any rate; by ceasing from words which are contemptuous and insulting to the poor; by breaking off familiarity, by forbearing to encourage that unworthy portion of the poor, who are likely to give you a most unjust and hard impression of the whole body. But I am sure many amongst you, to say the least, must have opportunities of doing much more. Many amongst you must have poor neighbours around you at home, from whom you may learn what poverty is, how great, how awful a claim it has upon all, and much more than all that we can do for it. Many amongst you must have friends who would be delighted to encourage you in the disposition to know the poor, and to love them; and whose experience would teach you how to avoid all extravagance and folly, which an ignorant zeal will naturally fall into. But it were foolish, in this case, to dread the effects of over zeal; much more it is to be dreaded, that there should be no zeal at all: that your holydays should be devoted only to your own pleasure; that, amidst the joyousness and festivities with which wealth surrounds itself at this coming Christmas season, you should bestow no

thought on that large body of your neighbours to whom Christmas is only a season of suffering, a season of cold, and darkness, and dreariness. If such be the case, it is most awful to think that a curse is on all our enjoyments; that our mirth and our festivity are but those of the rich man in the parable, who, when he died and was buried, found himself instantly in eternal torments, and was told that all the good things which he could expect throughout eternity, he had already received: all good was gone, and all evil was in store for him for ever. May God give us a better mind,—better for the worldly comfort of others, much more, infinitely better for the eternal welfare of our own souls!

SERMON XVII.

REV. XXII. 10—12.—*And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

So much presses upon the mind in reading these verses, that I hardly know how to put in order, or how to limit within any fit bounds, the various thoughts which they suggest. There is so much in the separate parts of them, and so much in them when taken together; there is so much in the particular time at which they were written, and in the very place which they hold in the volume of the Scriptures, that they seem better fitted to be the subject of a course of sermons, than to furnish matter for one only.

The place which they hold in the volume of the New Testament must strike the most careless observer. If you open your Bibles, you will find them in the last page of the last book of the whole Scriptures. All the books in the Bible are by no means placed in the order in which they were written; but it happens that the Book of the Revelation, as it stands the

last, so was it written the last: since that time, the book of the Holy Scriptures has received no other addition. And further, this book of the Revelation was written in the last years of the life of the last Apostle who had received the Holy Ghost in a special manner, for teaching with authority the things of the kingdom of God. Christianity had received its appointed signs, and no more were to be vouchsafed to it: all truth necessary to salvation had been once taught by men speaking what the Holy Ghost inspired, and such infallible teaching was from henceforth to be no more repeated. When Christ ascended into heaven, the Comforter descended in his place; and although God was no longer personally visible, yet the mighty works which the Apostles wrought through his aid, and the knowledge of things kept secret from the foundation of the world, which they derived from the teaching of his Spirit, made the presence of God among them no less manifest to the world, than when Christ had been with them in the body. But now, when the last Apostle was on the point of being called to his Lord, Christianity seemed completely to be launched upon the ocean of the world, to struggle against all the storms which might assail it. In that full sense in which Christ had foretold it, He was now to be manifested only to those who loved him; for the rest, neither sign nor wonder,

nor teaching of infallible truth and unalloyed wisdom, would be granted to them any more. Behold us here, then, still in this state in which the Church of Christ for more than seventeen centuries and a half has been striving,—still seeing no sign from heaven,—still vainly seeking amidst our difficulties and doubts for any living voice of infallible wisdom,—yet still with heaven and hell close behind us every hour,—still the servants of Christ, whether we choose to follow Him or no, and reserved to stand, whether living or dead, before his judgment-seat at his coming.

Let us listen, then, and bear ever with us in our inmost hearts the last words spoken by our Lord, when He committed his Church to its season of trial: "The time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Observe, He says, the "time is at hand," and "I come quickly;" although, in the preceding prophecy, the course of trials to which the Church would be exposed, is described as running through a long succession of ages. Undoubtedly, to every reader of these words, in every age, the time is at hand, and his Lord is

coming quickly,—his own time of watching, of trial, and of temptation, is passing away with every hour ; and the longer we live, the shorter seems the period which we have lived through, and the space between our life and our death seems continually a more insignificant point in the midst of eternity. The use of the consideration of Christ's coming speedily, is to encourage the patient, and to give a timely warning to the careless ; and for this purpose the speediness of our own departure from this world is the same as if the world itself were within a few years to perish. But the more literal sense of the words of the text seems to imply that the end of the world was near at hand, when compared with the period that had elapsed since its first creation. Whether this be so or not, is certainly far beyond the reach of human foresight : but the exceeding rapidity with which society has been moving forwards in the last three centuries, seems to show that man's work of replenishing the earth, must, in the common course of things, be accomplished before much more than two thousand years from the time of Christ's first coming shall have passed away.

But leaving this, let us consider the words left us for our instruction during the time that Christ is absent from us, be that time of greater or of less duration. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he that is filthy, let

him be filthy still." Every year that we live, these words seem to me to acquire a more awful meaning. When we see iniquity abounding and faith waxing cold,—when we see the most monstrous doctrines of ungodliness and wickedness uttered boldly in the very face of heaven,—we are apt to be surprised and somewhat disappointed that God does not at once assert his majesty, and that vengeance does not yet burst forth upon those who seem to delight in braving it. It is the impatient spirit with which the servants in the parable wanted at once to go and gather up the tares which the enemy had mingled with the good seed. But the answer given by their lord is substantially the same with the words of the text: "Let both grow together until the harvest." "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." God will not interfere with any show of his almighty power, either to convert the one, or to encourage the other. Once He has declared Himself, and given to the world visible signs of his interference; but He does so now no more. Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world; wickedness often prospers, and goodness is often oppressed: it seems as though God had left them both to stand or fall by their own efforts; and the only reason to make a man follow either good or evil, is

because he loves the one in his heart, and hates the other. He that loves evil may go on unchecked and unterrified; he who loves good must love it for itself, or must follow it by faith in what he hopes will be hereafter, though he can see no signs of it at present.

It cannot be too often repeated,—and never was the lesson more needed than at this hour,—that it is nothing but a thorough love of righteousness and goodness that can, with the blessing of God, keep our faith alive. To a good man, the evidence of the Gospel is abundantly satisfactory; to a bad man, it seems to have no force at all. Unless our principles support our faith, our faith will not long uphold our principles. In times of outward peace, such as those which we have long experienced, nothing is more common than to see men of unholy lives, and with no real love of goodness, not only loud in the profession, but undisturbed in the belief of Christianity. Attacks upon their faith do not come in their way; or if they do, they are made only by a small and inconsiderable party, and are urged weakly and ignorantly. In this state of things, the defenders of Christianity have the public voice on their side; their arguments are applauded, and their victory is really complete; for it is gained over adversaries whose blows have been struck timidly and blindly, who have fought under the disadvantage of having

the general feeling against them. But in times of another kind when the general feeling becomes divided, and the cause of Christianity has lost many of its artificial supports, nothing will support our faith effectually, but a real and earnest love of its principles, and a lively hatred of everything that is evil. When unbelief, instead of being received with general abhorrence, becomes generally fashionable,—when our profession of faith loses that confidence which is given by seeing that the majority are on its side,—then a man must begin in earnest to examine his own foundations,—to look for a stay within him, when outward aids begin to fall away. Woe to him in that moment, if his support be only intellectual,—if he relies alone on the books or the arguments which he had been used to consider all-triumphant. Many of my present hearers require to be warned on this point most earnestly. The question between Christianity and unbelief is now assuming a form essentially different from that which it wore in the last century ; and thus the popular books of evidences are becoming daily more insufficient to meet the arguments and objections with which you will now, on your entrance into the world, find your faith assailed. Most of the books of evidences which you have read are directed against deists, that is, against persons who professed that they believed in God, but

did not believe in his Son, Christ Jesus. Against deists and their arguments, the books I allude to (Butler, for instance, and Leslie) are, indeed, quite triumphant; but the battle is now fought upon different grounds, and you will be attacked, either by those who would represent everything as doubtful, and who, having no opinions of their own to defend, avail themselves of that weakness of the human mind, which suffers its doubts to disturb the tranquillity of its knowledge; or else, by those who say at once, that there is no God, and that our life will utterly and eternally perish with the decay of our mortal bodies. And this last opinion, as it is one which, to a good man, would bring distraction of mind little short of madness, so it is one which, to a bad man, the deeper he advances in wickedness, will become constantly more probable and more natural. God does, indeed, send on such persons strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, because they loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. And the beginnings of this fearful state, this sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness, are nearer at hand to us, perhaps, than we are disposed to fancy. He who indulges violent passions, who permits himself to return evil for evil,—to despise the notion of forgiving from the heart those who have done him wrong,—he is becoming ready to wish that the Gospel

were not true, and, as he who denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, he is becoming ready to wish, and if to wish, he will soon assuredly believe, that there is no judgment at all, and no God. Or, again, he who commits fornication, or any other sensual sin,—who endeavours to cheat himself with the notion that these things are of no great consequence,—he soon learns to hate the Gospel, which declares that no fornicator or unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ or of God; and from hating he soon comes to disbelieve, and to deny both the Son and the Father. Or still, again, he who, from strong natural powers and lively spirits, is disposed to think too highly of himself,—who seldom knows what it is to feel reverence or admiration, and far less to feel humility,—he cannot bear Christianity, which exalts God so highly, and teaches man that he can only be exalted by humbling himself; with him the notions of independence, and vigour, and power, and courage of mind, are as fatal as a violent nature or a sensual nature in the other cases that I have described; and the man becomes colder, and harder, and prouder, and more ignorant of himself, till he reverences nothing, admires nothing, and loves nothing, but himself and his own mind. All these are roads to atheism; and if any man will follow them far enough, he will surely become an atheist, although he

may read ever so constantly, and be unable to answer the arguments which have been drawn for the being and attributes of God. So it is, "he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." When arguments for atheism are brought forward, nothing seems to me so decisive against them as this certain fact,—that the surest way to make them seem convincing to our minds, is to plunge as deeply as possible into wickedness. Any man may easily and certainly become an atheist if he will but reject all good practices, all self-examination, all scruple of crime, and do the bidding of the devil without reserve.

On the contrary, "he that is holy, let him be holy still." He too will grow steadier and steadier in his faith, in proportion as he dreads sin more, and is more watchful over his life, and heart, and temper, and learns to deny himself, and to love his neighbour, and thus becomes more and more conformed to the Spirit of God. To him God manifests Himself, not by signs of his power, not by pouring irresistible conviction upon his understanding, but by speaking in the still small voice of peace, and hope, and love unfeigned, by giving him already an earnest of that blessed state of mind, which they who see God and live in Him continually and of necessity

enjoy. Truly, "he will be holy still," let the temptations, and difficulties, and dangers of his course be what they may. His thought is still, "Lord, to whom but thee shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. With thee, and with those who have followed thee, I will gladly stake my hopes for this world, and for eternity: I desire nothing but to follow in thy steps here, and, if it may be, through thy blood shed for my manifold sins and imperfections, to be where thou art hereafter. Nature may sometimes be impatient, may think that thy coming is too long delayed, may wish to exchange faith for sight, and hope for enjoyment. I may say, indeed, 'Come, Lord Jesus;' for such are the words of thy church, the bride, and of thy Spirit, which teaches the church what to wish and to pray for. But if thou still lingerest, let me wait in patience thy time, and occupy myself the while steadily in thy service. There is enough for me, and for every one of thy true servants, to do upon earth: do thou guide us, and strengthen us, and give us an undying zeal for the work. There are wants to be relieved, bodily and spiritual; ignorance to be enlightened; falsehood and wickedness to be reproved; truth to be upheld, defended, and declared. Grant that every year of life there may be some such blessed fruit of our labour; yet grant, also, that we do not magnify ourselves in our own works;

that we rejoice, not because the devils are subject to us, but because thou hast loved us, and hast written our names in heaven, and wilt bring us through thy grace to thy own eternal mansion with the Father."

SERMON XVIII.

JOHN XIII. 10.—*He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all.*

HARDLY, since the very earliest days of the Gospel, could these words have been repeated with exactly the same truth to any assembly of Christians. In saying to his disciples, “Ye are clean, but not all,” our Lord declared, that the clean were by far the greater number amongst them, although there was one single person who was an exception. Eleven of those who heard Him were pronounced to be clean, while one only was found wanting. What a state of almost heavenly blessedness should we think it now, if, when looking round upon any number of persons assembled in any Christian place of worship, we could persuade ourselves that eleven out of every twelve were such as Christ would pronounce to be clean!—not indeed free from sin, and far less removed above the reach of temptation; but yet so sound in principle, so sincere in their love of Christ, that they would need only to wash the feet,—to cleanse themselves from the common and almost necessary stains which daily life brings with it,—and would then be accounted

by Christ to be "clean every whit." Surely, when we look around on what men are, we should think that our lot was thrown in a most happy ground, if not eleven out of every twelve, but even one half of those whom we met in the house of God, could be thought such as Christ would call "clean."

The words of the text were spoken by our Lord just before He was beginning the season of his sufferings, and only a few hours before He was crucified. His disciples were all around Him, and one of them said, that he was ready to go with his Master into prison and to death. The words were spoken in entire sincerity, and, therefore, Christ declared, that he who spoke them was clean, although He knew that when the trial came they would not be fulfilled in practice. Even so we are here assembled at the beginning of the week in which we celebrate the memory of our Lord's sufferings, and only a few days before the time when we shall be invited to partake of his most blessed body and blood, in the sacrament of the holy communion. May we suppose Christ speaking to us as He did to his Apostles; could we hope that He would say to us, "'Ye are clean, but not all;' although some few of you may be lost, yet by far the greater number are my true disciples, and will follow me whithersoever I go?" Or would He rather speak to us in the language which He Himself

foretold would be most fitting in the latter days, —“ When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?” Our own consciences will be able best to tell us, if we examine a little what it was in our Lord’s Apostles which made Him say of them, that, with one exception, they were all clean.

We have said already, that it certainly was not because they were free from sin altogether. The Gospels contain many instances of faults, even amongst the most eminent of their number, which prove quite clearly that they were far from perfect. There are marks of ambition, of violence, of worldly-mindedness in their characters, which on different occasions drew forth our Lord’s reproof. But yet He calls them “clean,” because, as He said to them, that very same evening, “Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations.” They were men, who, when many others had gone back and walked no more with Him, and when they themselves did not understand aright those words of their Lord which had given so much offence, yet replied to Him, when He asked them, “Will ye also go away?” “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” He calls them “clean,” therefore, because their faith in Him had not failed; but they had continued

with Him in all his temptations, and loved Him better than any other service.

If this is the case, then, we may think, at first sight, that we too are all clean, because our faith in Christ has never failed us, and we have continued in his service ever since we were born. And so, indeed, we might think justly, if our notions of faith were the same as those of the Scripture. True it is, that none of us, perhaps, have ever doubted the fact of our Lord's resurrection; but it is, I fear, no less true, that many of us have, in the Scripture sense of the word, never believed it; and I will go even further, and say, that many who have doubted the fact, even in the very moment of their doubting, have shown more of Christian faith than many who never doubted it at all. This sounds like a paradox; but it is a plain and certain truth to those who are familiar with the Scriptures on one side, and have ever watched the workings of their own hearts on the other. Many have doubted it, like the Apostle Thomas in the Gospel, from their exceeding wish to find it true; they believe not for very joy. Alive to their own sins,—alive to the utter darkness of all beyond the grave, without the aid of revelation,—alive to the surpassing wisdom and excellence of the great revelation of God in Christ Jesus,—it is almost too good to be hoped for, that, for all they most lament and shrink from,

there should be so perfect a remedy,—that all, and more than all, that their fondest imaginations could picture, of good and excellent, should be a real and sober truth. Surely all those who know the Gospel and the nature of man, would pray earnestly that thousands who never have doubted of Christ's resurrection might doubt of it this instant, so that they might have with their doubt so much of a real Christian faith,—a heart and mind so much in agreement with the mind of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, and this is to our present purpose most particularly, it does not at all follow that they who do not doubt, therefore believe.

Taught the facts of our religion from childhood,—taught to consider them as very certain and very sacred, but too often not taught how to use them,—the events of Christ's life and death have no more occupied their hearts and minds than the movements of the sun, and moon, and stars: as far as practice is concerned, they think of the one no more than they do of the other. As children, they have said their Catechism, as a lesson,—as boys they have gone to church, when at home, because it is the custom of their families, and when at school, because the rules of the school oblige them to do so. But neither the Catechism nor the church service have gone beyond the particular portion of time—I may almost say, the particular part and corner of

the mind—that has been given to them. They have never fully entered into the system, so as visibly to affect the health and strength of the constitution. It is possible that, in many cases, a boy knows nothing of what may be called faith, till he begins to prepare for confirmation. But it is possible also that even that solemn service, admirable as is its design, and great as are its uses, if understood and applied, may pass over to some unprofitably. They may look upon it as a sort of examination in divinity, and think that if they can answer the questions put to them, so as to be reported fit for confirmation, in point of knowledge, they have done their business, and are qualified for the ceremony; and after it is over, they look upon it as on an examination when past, as a thing with which they have no further concern. Then comes the preparation, for the first time, of receiving the communion of the Lord's supper: and this, perhaps, is the first time that some have ever acquired a notion of what Christian faith really is. And for this very reason, because there is a general feeling, that the receiving of the sacrament is different from our common religious services, that it cannot be trifled with in the manner in which we know that we do trifle with those other services; it is, in short, because the sacrament does really require faith, and faith is a thing which our evil nature

knows not and shrinks from,—that therefore we so often find young persons so unwilling to come to the Lord's table. Nay, sometimes, even if they do receive it they do not yet learn fully what it is to believe. So manifold are the tricks of our self-deceiving hearts, that some go to the communion itself as a matter of form, because they think that it would be marked in them to stay away; and then they try to persuade themselves that they cannot help going and if they cannot help going, then they do not profane it by going unworthily;—that it is not their own free choice to go, and the guilt of profaning it will not rest upon their heads. Strange and shocking as it seems, I *know* that this argument has been used where the rules of a school or college have required every one to attend as a matter of regulation;—I fear it may have been used even where no such rule exists, and where it can only be supposed that an habitual absence from the communion, in persons of a certain age, cannot fail to be remarked as strange, and as a just matter of regret. But so it is, that from whatever cause,—whether from wilful neglect before they went, or more commonly from inveterate carelessness afterwards,—too many of those who do attend the communion, still appear to be strangers to the principle of faith. They cannot be said, like the Apostles, to “have continued with Christ in his tempta-

tions," for they have never known what it is to struggle against temptation for Christ's sake. They have never made it their deliberate choice to abide with Him, let who would forsake Him, because they were sure that He had "the words of eternal life." As to leaving Him outwardly,—that is, of changing their religion, and becoming heathens and Mahometans,—that is a question which has never come before their minds, as there is nothing to tempt them to do it; but as to leaving Him really, that is to say, ceasing to obey Him, to honour Him, to love Him, they do not *cease* to do these things, only because they have never *begun* to do them at all; they do not turn back from Christ, only because they have never really followed Him. However much then we may be called Christians, and however little we have ever doubted the fact of Christ's life and death, we cannot on that account lay claim to that true and lively faith which Christ saw in his eleven Apostles, and for which He did not hesitate to pronounce them to be "clean every whit."

But what follows then? If we are not thus clean,—if we have need of far more than a partial washing,—are we in the condition of our Lord's twelfth disciple, of whom it is said, that he was the son of perdition, and that when his hand was on the table of Christ, it was the hand of one who was betraying his Master?—God

forbid! much rather may we hope that it may be said of us, that we are not far from the kingdom of God, even if we are not yet spiritually entered into it. We are not clean, indeed, too many of us; but that Gospel which is preached unto us,—that Gospel whose great and most solemn completion we this week celebrate,—holds out to you and to me, to every one of the children of men who need it, a fountain for sin and for uncleanness—a means whereby our sins, though scarlet, may be made as white as snow, and we, like the Apostles, may stand in the sight of God as “clean every whit.” The Gospel is “Christ crucified;” the power of God, and the wisdom of God: power to root out the most hardened evils of our nature,—wisdom to give even to babes a knowledge beyond all that earthly learning could ever acquire or teach. “Christ crucified” is this week more especially set forth before us: would to God that you and I, and all that in name belong unto Him, might so dwell with humble and penitent hearts upon that solemn story, that, when we meet in this place next Sunday, we might be able, with something of a fitting joy, to celebrate and give thanks to “Christ risen.” How often have we lived over this week of our Lord’s passion, and felt no grief and no repentance! how often have we attended his service on Easter-day, and felt no joy! I speak not of the observance of these

particular days for any especial sacredness in themselves; one week in itself is but like another: but I speak of the opportunity which it offers; I speak of the necessity, if we ever hope to see God, of feeling at some one time or other of our lives, what is contained in those few words, "Christ crucified, and Christ risen;" of letting our minds embrace the reason why He was crucified, and for what He rose; of learning what it is to be a sinner, and what it is to stand acquitted before the throne of God, forgiven and beloved. This is faith,—and by this, and this alone, can we ever be acquitted, or ever overcome the world. We may have a deep knowledge of divinity,—still more may we have **a deep** knowledge of earthly things;—we may have many qualities which our friends dearly love, many which even our enemies cannot refuse to honour;—we may live in comfort, with large enjoyment of the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of understanding, and the delights of affection, and our names may be repeated in after times, as men who did worthily in their generation to their neighbours and their country;—all this may be; and yet we may awake from our graves, when earth falls in ruin around us, and hear from Him, whom we must hear as a Judge, though we may reject Him as a Saviour, that we have had our reward,—that in our lifetime, or at least in earth's lifetime, we have

received our good things, and that the cup is now empty for ever. All will have passed away, as a thousand worlds, with all their interests and pleasures, may have passed away already, in infinite space and infinite time. But of eternal life, and of eternal happiness, there is but one fountain, even God: and to sinners such as we are, that fountain is for ever closed, unless we have access to it through Christ, and for his sake are regarded by his Father as "clean every whit."

SERMON XIX.

LUKE XVII. 36, 37.—*Two men shall be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord ? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*

THE question here put to our Lord by his disciples, seems to partake somewhat of the spirit in which the prophecies of the Scripture are generally read, and by which their usefulness is very greatly lessened. Nor is this spirit confined to the prophecies only : it is often seen in the explanations given of the parables of our Lord, and indeed of every other part of Scripture. What I mean, is the habit of making the prophecies or parables allude to one thing only, when in fact they allude to many ; the making them relate to particular places, persons, and nations, when, in fact, they relate to particular sins, temptations, and states of mind, which have existed in a great many different places, and in many different persons and nations. Thus we lose the benefit of what we read in two ways : first, by understanding it as speaking of past times or of other persons, we keep our own lives and consciences out of its reach ; and secondly, we absolutely turn our food into

poison, by using such passages as weapons of controversy, wherewith to triumph over others, instead of turning their edge, as we should do, to cut off what is evil in ourselves.

To apply this to the words of the text. It is very true, that Jerusalem was the immediate occasion of our Lord's discourse, and its destruction was the first illustration of the truth of his prophecy. When He declared that "in the days of the Son of Man, two men should be in the field; that one should be taken, and the other left," it was a natural question, on the part of his disciples, to ask Him where this would be; in what country, and upon what persons, was this sudden and searching judgment to fall? Let us mark the words of Christ's answer: "Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together." The words are clearly a sort of proverb; but their meaning cannot be doubtful. "You ask where this judgment is to fall—upon what country, and on what people. I tell you, everywhere. Wherever there is sin and carelessness, there will be the judgment; even as there are surely found birds of prey, wherever there is a carcase to devour. Do not then deceive yourselves by giving to my words a local and personal meaning, which would cripple their general usefulness. If they applied to Jerusalem only, in less than forty years, when Jerusalem will be destroyed, the lesson they

contain would be useless. But their truth and their force shall last for centuries after Jerusalem is in ruins; and after the nation by which Jerusalem is to finish, has been cut off from the face of the earth in its turn. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;' and till heaven and earth do pass, there never will be a time, there never will be a country, there never will be an individual, to whom they will not be as useful and as applicable as to the Jews at this moment."

Such I conceive to be the purport of our Lord's reply to his disciples, when He said, "Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together." And it is according to the lesson thus conveyed, that I would wish to dwell upon the words of the preceding verse, "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

I take them as applying to ourselves who are this day here assembled. We are "all together in the field," engaged in the same daily business; living, in a manner, to ourselves, during the greatest part of the year; and so much engaged amongst ourselves, that we have little time or inclination to take much part in what is going on elsewhere. Nay, from the very circumstances of our case, we are in a closer relation to each other than can exist between neighbours in general society. The words of

a former verse are applicable to us here: "Two men shall be in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left." We are not only working together in the field, that is, engaged together in the same occupations of our busier hours; but like the two men in one bed, our hours of rest, of refreshment, and amusement, are all shared together likewise. No connexion can be well closer, both in hours of work and hours of play and enjoyment, than that of those who are being brought up together at the same school.

But mark what follows next: our Lord says, "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left: two men shall be in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left." It is even so, indeed. We are living closely together now; we share in one another's business and pleasures; but shall we be always so united? If the veil could for a moment be drawn up, which hangs over the future; if we could but look eight or ten years onwards, how infinite would be the variety of fortune experienced by those now here assembled, who have now so much in common with each other! The one shall be taken and the other left. Life will wear an infinitely varied aspect then, to those who find it now so uniform. What a difference of success and failure, of prosperity and adversity, of wealth and poverty,

rank and obscurity, of joy and grief, will befall those who are now in circumstances so similar ! And what mortal eye, though ever so well acquainted with the present characters and fortunes of you all, could dare to predict your future destiny ? Who shall be taken, and who left ; on whom misfortune will fall, and whom it may spare ; nothing in your present state can enable any man so much as to guess. Even in the common points of worldly fortune, there can be formed no sure calculation, so suddenly and so unexpectedly, even in these matters, do our prospects, in a few years, either brighten or darken. But still less can we form the slightest notion of our happiness and misery in after life ; of what may be the state of our domestic relations ; what the condition of our health and faculties ; what the degree of respect or indifference with which we may be treated in the world. Nothing, indeed, is more striking, than, when we have lived ten or twenty years from the period of our leaving school, to consider the various fates of those with whom we were once living so familiarly, as far as it may be in our power to trace it. Above all, we thus gain a very lively notion of the uncertainty of the duration of life ; for few can look thus around, even in the full vigour of manhood, without perceiving that many of those who entered on the world with them, and who set out from one common

port, have even already ceased to accompany them, and are gone down in their first spring-time to the grave.

But our Lord's words have yet a further and more solemn application. "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." If the streams of our several fortunes were but divided for a time, and all were to unite again, and find their way together into one and the self-same ocean, the sense of their separation would be far less awful. But, instead of this, we know that, in too many cases, the streams do but flow further and further asunder, till their end at last is the very extreme of distance and difference. We know, in short, that, in the most solemn sense of all, one will at last be taken, and the other left; one taken away into outer darkness, the other left as a full shock of corn on the harvest field, to be gathered into the garner of his Lord. So near, so closely connected with each other now,—yet then, as far parted asunder, as to hell and heaven! In that day the eagles of God will surely seek out their prey, and with most infallible certainty will fix on it. No more mixture of good and evil then; no more of the wheat and tares growing together, when the tares were spared lest the wheat should be hurt by rooting them up; no more blessings undeservedly enjoyed by evil men, because they are in the same field

together with the good, and the rain and the sunshine which God gives it must fall equally upon all those who work in it. But then, one shall be taken and the other left: the Lord has taken to Him his great power, and reigneth; and all that He regards in those whom He had suffered to live here together, is, whether they are fit to be transplanted together to heaven.

Such will be the separation that will, one day or other, take place amongst us who are now so closely connected. But this last separation differs in one very great point from that other and nearer separation which I spoke of just before, when we got out to our several fortunes in life. Of *that*, I said, that no human eye could judge, or even guess, who, amongst the congregation now here assembled, would be taken and who would be left; whose lot in life would be prosperous, and whose the contrary. And not only can we not guess, but no efforts of your own can be sure of success in this matter; do what you will, the experience of all ages has proved that you cannot insure earthly prosperity. But, in the great separation that will take place hereafter, it does depend on yourselves, for I speak to persons already called to the privileges of Christ's Gospel, and with all things ready on Christ's part to give you the victory; it does, I say, depend on yourselves, whether you shall be among those who are

taken, or among those who are left. And not only so, but they who watch you narrowly, cannot but see *that* in your several characters, which is the seed, however far from maturity, of eternal happiness or misery. True, indeed, that the seed which promises the fairest may be blighted, withered, choked, and never come to the harvest: true, also, that the seed of the worst and most deadly plants may, also, be timely smothered, or the plant, in its middle growth, may be weeded out, and thrown away. We may neither rashly or blindly trust the promise of good, nor fearfully and desperately abandon to itself the promise of evil. Still there is the seed at this moment to be seen, which, if it does hold on its natural progress to the end, will yield the harvest of life in some, of death in others. And, therefore, we have deep reason to be thankful for every mark of early goodness: we dare not slight as trifling the faintest sign of early wickedness. *We* dare not, nor should *you* dare: for if you do slight such signs, they become every year darker and more fatal, and give more alarming assurance of a deadly issue. There are some boys whose tempers are weak and timid,—who yield to the persuasions of others,—who dislike trouble and fear danger. But the Christian's spirit is not the spirit of fear, nor the spirit of softness; but the spirit of power, and of hardiness, and of love, and of a

sound mind. And such tempers, if they are not often guilty of violence or cruelty, are very apt to sink into sensual lusts, meanness, and fraud, and all the baseness of luxurious selfishness: for it is not without reason that St. Paul puts the sins of uncleanness, and of covetousness or selfish greediness, so close together; both very commonly belong to the same character. Others again are bold and overbearing,—insolent and oppressive,—tyrants to all within their power,—and offensive to their equals and superiors. This character, too, so totally opposite as it is to Christian charity, hardens more and more with the hardening influences of the world,—till it becomes, like the way-side in the parable of the sower, so hard that the seed of eternal life makes not a moment's impression on it. It is most common to see it retained through life,—to see those who were known at school as cruel and oppressive, go on in life equally hard and unprincipled at the bottom, however much the mere forms of society oblige them to cloak it under a manner of outward decency and courteousness. Others again, and these by far the more numerous body, are with no such decided symptoms of evil,—neither cowardly and weak, nor cruel and oppressive, with no more alarming sign than a general thoughtlessness, and a fondness for what they like to do rather than for what they ought. With no

more alarming sign, it is true; but is not this alone alarming enough? If it be not, what becomes of Christ's words, that unless a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be his disciple? He means, that a man, to be a Christian, must be living upon principle, and not according to his humour: that they who are called good-natured, are often good-natured by fits and starts, or by halves; they are so in some instances,—that is, they will do a kind thing to please their companions, but they do not care if they give their parents pain by their extravagance and by their neglect of their proper duties; that they are good-natured, in short, from constitution and fancy, not out of a true Christian spirit of kindness. It is true that thoughtlessness, merely considered in itself, is a fault which growing years are very likely to amend; and this is the reason, I believe, why older persons sometimes view it with indifference. It is true that the empty house will surely be filled hereafter; but, because it has been left so long empty, it is the evil spirits, far more than the spirit of God, that are likely to become its inhabitants. I use the language of that beautiful parable which was read in the Gospel of this morning, and which so strongly enforces the truth, that idleness and carelessness, although they are very likely to be themselves removed, are likely also to be only changed

for other and worse evils, instead of for good. In fact, in other words, he who is idle in youth, because that is the natural fault of youth, is likely to be worldly-minded in after life, because that is the natural fault of manhood. And, therefore, I regard carelessness as an evil and alarming symptom, because it is a proof, that in the heart left so empty, the Spirit of God cannot be abiding; and where He is not, it is but a choice between varieties of evil. Finally, there are some in whom the Spirit's work, though faint, is already visible,—who are walking, however imperfectly, in the faith and fear of God. This, too, is a seed, which has its proper fruit, and that fruit is life eternal. But let the sight of the natural world, at this very season, remind those in whom this seed exists, how much they must do to foster it. Those buds which are now swelling upon every tree, may be, and too many of them will be, cut off by frosts or storms, and their promise will end in nothing. Be ye, therefore, careful and watchful, remembering, that although you have in you the seed of good, yet perpetual prayer and labour are required to preserve it unharmed until the harvest.

SERMON XX.

1 PET. IV. 11.—*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*

THE same sentiment is expressed by St. Paul, where he says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It is, indeed, one of the very foundation stones of revelation, that God should in our actions be all in all; as it is the great guilt of those who know, and do not, that, "knowing God, they yet glorify him not as God, neither are thankful." St. Peter, it is true, is speaking in the text particularly, of certain offices in the early Christian Church. The offices were various, and so were the gifts required to fulfil them properly; but all these were wrought by one and the self-same Spirit; whether it were the gift of speaking or of preaching, which was required to do the office of an apostle or prophet; or the gift of an active and cheerful spirit, which was needed for the office of minister or deacon, whose principal business was to provide for the bodily wants of the poor. But it is clear that the meaning of St. Peter's words applies to all

offices and all callings whatever, and to all the various gifts by which God enables us to discharge their several duties. If any man speak, if any man minister, if any man labour with his hands, or if any work with his understanding;—whether our business be active or quiet;—whether we are engaged in the actual duties of life, or in the preparation for them;—still we should labour, as by the ability which God giveth; and we should strive in all things to glorify God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I proceed, then, to apply this general rule to those cases in which we ourselves, who are now here assembled, most require it. And I will follow a division analogous to that of the Apostle. I will first speak of our labours of the understanding; next, of our labours of charity; and, lastly, of all our more general conduct, which may not properly fall under either of the two former heads. In all these, we are worse than nothing, unless we glorify God through Jesus Christ.

First, then, of our labours of the understanding. “If any man speak,” says St. Peter, “let him speak as the oracles of God.” May I say, “If any man read, let him read as if his book were God’s work;” or, “as if he were God’s scholar?” To read is, with most of us, our particular appointed business; we spend, or ought to spend, a great deal of time in it: but

what shall we do, if during this large portion of our time, God is far away from us? If God is not in our reading, considering how much of our day be spent in it, is it not somewhat like living without God in the world? Yet it is not possible that all, or the greatest part of our reading, should be strictly about God. We read the books of the Heathen, who did not know Him; we read also many books of those who did know Him, but whose works, unhappily, give no sign that they did so. We read books of science, or books of entertainment, where we cannot expect the name of God to find a place. How, then, can we read all these as if we were God's scholars? how, in dwelling upon subjects so little seemingly connected with Him, can we be glorifying God through Jesus Christ? It seems that the question is not an easy one, since it has been found so difficult, in practice at least, to answer it. We see that they who profess to glorify God in all their lives, do it, not by reading all things as God's scholars; but by giving up many kinds of reading altogether. We see, on the other hand, that they whose knowledge is the deepest, and whose understandings are the most highly cultivated, too often have, amidst all their knowledge, retained no place for God; that neither with their lips, nor in their lives, do they glorify Him. It is too common a case to excite our wonder that knowledge is not

always followed by goodness; and we know that without goodness God cannot be glorified. It seems, then, a very difficult thing to read on a great variety of subjects, and yet read as God's scholars: difficult, as most Christian graces are difficult; but not surely impossible, if we follow the right way of effecting it. Now we cannot read all things as God's scholars, if we have never been his scholars at all; we cannot find Him, or see Him, by faith, in every place, if we have never learnt to know his voice where it speaks in its own proper tones to us. In other words, we cannot make a Christian use of other books, if the book of God itself be not familiar to us. Nor, again, can we possibly turn common things into our spiritual food: we shall not easily be led to think of the highest things by the study of books on worldly matters, if even, when the occasion directly calls for it, our thoughts are still slow to travel heavenward. I can conceive a man praying in church, or in his own house, at certain stated times of prayer, and yet never thinking of God when he is reading a history or a poem:—but it is absolutely impossible that such books should make him think of God, if he does not think of Him at other times;—if his prayers be omitted or said carelessly, it is out of the question that he should feel any thing like a devotional spirit when reading the histories, poems, or orations, of a heathen. And,

therefore, if we would learn to read every thing as God's scholars, we must at least read the Bible as such,—I mean with a sincere desire to practise it. I am quite sure, that even if the lessons read every Sunday in the Church service were but carefully attended to, there could not be so much ignorance of the Scriptures as we now meet with. Coming over again, as these lessons do, year after year, it would seem no difficult matter to remember them ; and although they form only a small part of the whole Bible, yet even these, if thoroughly known, would be of very great service to us. Indeed, if they were well known, we may be pretty sure that more of the Bible would be known also:—it is not natural that what we really know should excite in us no interest or curiosity to know more. But, if we do once get a knowledge of the Bible,—by which I mean not a knowledge of the mere history and antiquities of the Jews, but of the principles of life which the Bible teaches;—and, above all, that great principle which runs through it from beginning to end, that God should be all in all to us in our lives,—then we learn to get that true view of the world and all things in it, which will in a manner perforce present itself to our minds whenever a false view is laid before us. If this be rooted and implanted in us, any thing opposite to it will no more fail to bring it vividly before us,

than anything that is agreeable to it:—nay, I know not that the very contrast does not serve to set it off; and whether the Christian ever feels more keenly awake to the purity of the spirit of the Gospel, than when he reads the history of crimes and follies related with no true sense of their evil;—or when, in the deepest strains of passionate poetry, all the miseries and all the joys of life are touched upon, save that only misery of sin, which *he* knows to be alone incurable,—save that only joy of a heart at peace with God, which he knows to be alone eternal.

We may read all things then, and yet read all as God's scholars; drawing even from the writings of those who thought but of evil, or at least were utterly careless of God, a food for holy and spiritual principles to be nourished with. And then we see the force of Christ's words, when He said, that "every scribe, instructed to the kingdom of heaven, is like unto an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The extent and variety of our knowledge, the command of things new and old, of things sacred and things profane, does, indeed, instruct us with tenfold power for the service of the kingdom of God. But if acquired without that knowledge and love of God which can make it minister to his service, then, indeed, it does any thing but instruct us to the kingdom of heaven; the exercise of our

understanding, if made in such a case our principal employment, is one of the surest and speediest poisons to our souls; there is no evil spirit who may not find room for himself easily in that heart, which is occupied only by the gay and yet dead furniture of intellectual knowledge.

I have spoken more at length upon this point, because it concerns what is our peculiar business here. Yet the next point is no less worthy of our notice—our labours of charity, or our acts of kindness to our neighbours. “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth. If we give but a cup of cold water to one of the humblest of our brethren, let it be done for Christ’s sake. Perhaps the need of our remembering this is greater than we are apt to imagine. There is something so delightful in kindness, so natural in the wish to please and to relieve,—so exceedingly sweet in the consciousness of having done good to others, and in receiving the return of their grateful love,—that I am afraid our charity is very often unsanctified; we think of our suffering brethren only, without remembering who it is that puts Himself forward in their persons to receive our love, and if we will but see Him, to take in their behalf the office of overpaying all that we can do to them. We see not Christ in those who need our charity; we see not God in our own ability to relieve them. For what have we that

we have not received ; and that which we gave them, are we the owners of it in truth, or only the stewards of God's bounty ? I speak of charity, and of relieving the poor ; but it applies no less to every kindness, to whomsoever bestowed. Good-nature, and all the various ways which we have of obliging one another where there is no need of alms, are naturally highly popular, and, to most minds, carry their own reward with them. But here, too, we give or we show kindness, without thinking of God, and the consequence is evil both to others and to ourselves. To others, because, thinking that whatever kindness we show, we had a right in a manner not to show, we soon become satisfied with what we do, and even allow ourselves sometimes to look upon it as a compensation for ill-humour, neglect, or even positive unkindness and insult. To ourselves, because, forgetting our Master, and what He has done for us, and what He requires of us, we compare ourselves only with ourselves, and are then soon contented with our progress. A little thing becomes magnified, when the scale is so minute ; and we are pleased with ourselves for our good and amiable qualities, when, had we tried our hearts by Christ's law, we should have seen how little room there was for self-satisfaction, and how much more there was in them of selfishness than of love.

So again, in all those parts of our conduct which do not come under either of these two heads, there is no real goodness, there is even no safety from condemnation, unless we glorify God through Jesus Christ. With regard to the employment of our time, the exercise of our bodily faculties, the government of our tongues, how soon shall we be satisfied, and into how much of real sin shall we continually be falling, if we do not, in all these matters, remember that we are but stewards of God's manifold bounties; that our time, our bodies, and the wonderful faculty of speech, were all only lent us to improve them; lent us to glorify Him who gave them. And to glorify Him in Jesus Christ, for the Father and the Son may never be separated; and we can neither know nor glorify, nor in any wise please the Father, but only through his Son Christ Jesus. That is, that all our thoughts, and all our actions, are unworthy of God's acceptance; that they can be accepted by Him only in his beloved Son. He in our place and we in his: that as He took upon Him the infirmities of our nature, we might be clothed with the perfections of his; and as He died because we were sinners, so we might be loved, and receive eternal life, because He is righteous.

SERMON XXI.

MARK VI. 31.—*And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.*

THERE are a great many considerations which this single passage may give birth to; but two in particular may be made most applicable to our present circumstances. The one is, the example of earnest and unabated labour afforded by Christ and his Apostles: “they had no leisure so much as to eat;” and the other, the spirit and meaning of his words, “Come ye by yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.” Both these points seem capable of yielding much that is useful to all of us who are now here assembled.

We are accustomed to think of our Lord as furnishing us with an example of many things; but not particularly of energy and constant exertion. We think of his devotion to God, his benevolence, his meekness, his patience, and of many others of the perfections of his character; but we do not perhaps observe, that He affords to us a no less perfect pattern of those excellences which St. Paul has so well described in one single verse, when he tells the Roman

Christians to be “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” In this, as in other things, “Christ pleased not himself;” but was content to give up his whole time and all his faculties to the service of God. “They had no leisure so much as to eat.”

These last words are well illustrated by another passage in the Gospel of St. John, where it says, that his disciples left Jesus by the side of a well, in Samaria, while they themselves went to the neighbouring town to buy food. Whilst they were absent, a woman of Samaria came to the well, and our Lord was engaged in speaking with her, and with the men of the town, whom her report of Him brought to see Him. At last his disciples came back and brought the food, and begged Him to eat. But even then his answer was, that He had meat to eat which they knew not of; and this meat, He said, was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish his work.

It appears then, that what hindered our Lord from having leisure so much as to eat, was the intense interest which He felt in doing his Father’s work. His was not a bondman’s service, giving to the task he hates the least possible share of his time and strength; it was indeed the zealous service of a son, who came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him. What a lesson is this for all of us,—

I speak not only of the younger ones amongst us, but of us all; what a lesson to us, when we are so eager, if I may so speak, to change the stones into bread, to indulge our natures with refreshment and ease; and when our work, even in the best of us, is too often, if not in a bond-man's, at least in a hireling's spirit; if we do not dislike it, we yet are apt to be too much satisfied with ourselves for doing it, and to look upon it too fondly as giving us a claim to so much reward.

But it is well too to consider the nature of our Lord's work. "There were many coming and going." His work was not silent and solitary study; it was not the labour of his hands in some one regular business, in which, though the hands are employed, the mind may be at rest, and the man may go to rest at night with only that sort of weariness which makes sleep the wholesomer and the sweeter. Christ's was not the labour of mind only, nor the labour of body only; but both together. It was the kind of labour which is indeed the very best for the spiritual health of us all, but which is to our bodies and our minds perhaps the most fatiguing: I mean, constant personal intercourse with others, in the endeavour to do good to their bodies and their souls. Our Lord was hardly ever alone, nor was He, though in a crowd, yet in a crowd with which He had no concern, so

that He might still follow his own thoughts and his own business ; but his thoughts were of them,—his business was to do them good. Nor was it a multitude of the same persons, but one continually changing : “ There were many coming and going.” This may seem a little thing to notice ; but I believe, with regard to the increase of excitement and consequent exhaustion which it occasions, it is by no means trifling. The very constant sight of new faces, —the mere confusion of the perpetual moving to and fro,—the being obliged so often to repeat the same things to a succession of different persons, and not having any of them long enough our hearers to have acquired for them, or inspired in them towards us, a particular personal knowledge and regard,—all these are things which serve to make exertion felt more deeply. But this was the course of life that our Lord chose ; and his fervent love towards God and man made Him follow it so heartily, that He would not allow Himself leisure so much as to eat.

Yet with all this constant activity in doing good, let us hear the words of the text that follow : “ Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.” We know, from other places in the Gospels, of what sort of rest our Lord was here speaking, and how He employed these hours of retirement and solitude. No doubt, partaking as He did of the bodily infir-

mities of our nature, He required rest, literally and in the simplest sense of the word,—and no doubt also that such periods of rest and entire refreshment are not only allowable but useful, and even necessary. Yet Christ shows us how we may refresh our bodies and minds without letting our souls suffer; how we may return from such retirement, strengthened alike in body and in soul for the work that is set before us. These times, which our Lord passed in a desert place, generally, that is, among the mountains that rise at some little distance from the shores of the sea of Galilee, were his favourite times of prayer and meditation. For this, even the work of daily charity was suspended; inasmuch as He knew, that to man's nature even the work of charity itself became hurtful, if the spirit of faith and love to God were suffered to flag; and that to be continually doing, however good may be the works, has a tendency to make us too much satisfied with them and with ourselves. It is only God who worketh hitherto without cessation, whose providence for the works of his hands never slumbers. And when our Lord defended his own healing a man on the Sabbath day by the example of his Father, to whom all days are alike,—(“for he who keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep,”) the Jews rightly understood, that He was thereby making Himself equal with God. But He who, as God,

worked and does work for ever, yet, as man, and for our example, thought it right to vary his active labours with intervals of religious rest.

Here, then, in these three parts of the text,—in the zeal with which our Lord pursued his work,—in the particular nature of it,—and in the rest with which He thought fit from time to time to vary it, and to refresh himself for it,—there is matter of special improvement for three different classes of persons, such as in the three temptations which befel Him at the beginning of his ministry. The zeal with which He pursued his work, so that they had no leisure so much as to eat, is an example for that most numerous class who are merely following their pleasure, or who, if obliged to work, yet work unwillingly and grudgingly. The particular nature of Christ's work is an example and a warning for those who, like the ground choked with thorns, are working indeed, and working zealously ; but whose work is never of that sort as Christ's : it is worldly in its beginning, and worldly also in its end. And in the rest which Christ took from time to time, and the uses which He made of it, even they who are actually labouring in his service, may learn how alone their labour may be blessed to themselves as well as to others ; how their work may indeed be such as that, when they fail in this world,

they may be received into the everlasting habitations of God.

In all considerations of this kind, it is of the last importance that we all see clearly the particular class of men to which we ourselves belong, and apply to ourselves that particular lesson which is intended for us. A Pharisee might have received more harm than good by listening to our Lord's reproaches of the false doctrines of the Sadducees; a publican, in the same manner, might have been injured by dwelling upon what Christ said of the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The condemnation of faults not our own, is easy; but it is, at the same time, worse than unprofitable. Thus, irreligious persons delight in all those passages of Scripture which speak of the worthlessness of saying, "Lord, Lord," unless we do his will; they are rejoicing that they are not hypocrites, forgetting that they are all the while something even worse. Their concern is not with the deceit of Jacob, but with the profaneness of Esau. And, it should be remembered also, that the very worst cases of brute wickedness are, for this very reason, not so much mentioned in Scripture, as other less shocking offences, because God's word needed not to dwell upon what mere natural reason and conscience taught us to regard with abhorrence. Atrocious cruelty, utter hardness and brutality of feeling, and a want of natural

affection to our relations, are things which are not so much human vices as monstrosities: God's revealed will is intended to carry us on further than we could have gone by our mere natural knowledge of Him, not to repeat over again what we must be—more like beasts than men if we do not know already. Christians do not need to be enjoined what even common sinners are not so vile as to leave undone, nor to be warned against sins which even publicans and sinners would shrink from. “Sinners, also, love those that love them;—sinners, also, lend to sinners, that they may receive as much again.”

To apply this to the present case: those among us who have no zeal for any kind of useful labour;—who hardly exercise at all, or exercise no more than they must, their common faculties of the understanding;—who, so far from devoting their hearts to God, have not even learnt to love their own earthly relations, but prefer their own selfish and brute enjoyments, to their own improvement, or the wishes of their friends;—they who care for nothing so much as for eating, drinking, and playing;—with these the two latter parts of the text have, as yet, little to do; they are not advanced high enough to need them. The lesson which they require is the first and simplest part of the text: to learn diligence from Christ's example; to follow their work more earnestly, and in a better spirit;

to think that there is something in life, higher and better than the enjoyments of a beast. Unless they get so far as this, there is no danger, indeed, of the seed being parched up for want of root, and much less of its being choked by over luxuriant weeds : their hearts are but the hard wayside, too dull and too degraded for the seed ever to live in them at all. No one, in short, can ever be a Christian, if he is not fit to be a man. It will be time enough hereafter to tell them of the wisdom of religious rest, even from Christian duties, when they have some notion of what Christian duty is. It will be time enough to talk of the danger of too much admiring their mere intellectual faculties, when they shall have first learnt to exert and take pleasure in them at all. Instead of thinking, then, that they are not guilty of intellectual pride, or of too highly valuing their own virtues, they should recollect why they are not guilty of these things, and that it is only because they cannot be proud of what they have not got, and that their own faults are of a much lower order ; not the pride of having conquered themselves, but gross selfishness ; not loving man more than God, but themselves more than man ; not trusting too much to their understandings, but altogether neglecting them. For them, therefore, much of the Gospel is as yet a dead letter ; they must be far above what they are now, before

they can require to be warned against the faults of Christians; they must first learn to acquire the common virtues and excellences of men. In short, they must be not far from the kingdom of God, before they can hope to enter into it; they must be sensible to the laws of nature and reason, before they can ever understand those of the Gospel.

SERMON XXII.

MARK VI. 31.—*And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.*

BEFORE I go on with the subject of the text, it may be right to make one or two remarks, in order to prevent what I said on Sunday last from being misunderstood, and that, too, so misunderstood, as to render it mischievous rather than useful. I said, that it was very important that we should all understand clearly the particular class of characters to which we ourselves belong; that so we may each apply to ourselves the particular lesson which is intended for us. And, to apply this to the case before us, I said, that they who had no zeal for any kind of labour were not concerned with exhortations to choose rather that sort of labour which is most useful, and, still less, with warnings not to pursue their labour too eagerly. Such persons, I said, had not got far enough for lessons of this kind; but required first to learn from our Lord's example of mere diligence in his calling, without regard to the after question of what his particular calling was. But, in thus speaking of classes of

characters, I never supposed that these would always go along with particular ages, or particular situations in life. Generally speaking, no doubt, mere idleness is the fault of the very young; and, generally speaking, they would less require the warning against labouring in worldly things only, or against labouring without some intervals of religious rest. Yet it would be very foolish to suppose, either that no young boy had any need to be reminded of these points, or that no older person required to be excited to simple diligence and exertion. There are many cases in which the old require what is properly the instruction of the young,—many in which the young require to be warned against the faults of more advanced age,—many also, in which both will stand in need at once of both. It happens that one fault may be partly, not entirely subdued; that we may be grown enough in character to be liable to new temptations, without being out of the reach of our old ones; that, therefore, we may require to guard at once against the evils which beset different points of our progress, even if we need not guard against each in an equal degree. But of all this no man can judge in his neighbour; it were well if he could always judge truly of it even in himself. In speaking then of the besetting faults of early age, I do not mean, either that all the young require most to be warned against these, or that

none but the young are concerned with them ; in speaking of the besetting faults of a riper character, there may be young persons who have great need to beware of them, and there may be old persons who have not ; and, again, there may be very many, both old and young, to whom it may be highly useful to be cautioned against both.

These things are of consequence every where, but particularly so in a congregation like the present, where the differences of age are so strongly marked. Were this not remembered, I might be thought, at one time, to be preaching against one part of my hearers, and, at another time, against another ; and the remarks that I make may be supposed to be levelled at particular persons, rather than at particular faults and dangers. And those differences in our situation and relations to one another, which elsewhere are necessarily kept up, may be carried into things, and to places where they should be wholly lost sight of. For when we are here assembled, as more immediately in the presence of God, our relation to God and Christ is brought out into such clear light, and presses, or ought to press, so strongly upon the minds of us all, that our common earthly relations to each other, sink, for the time, into insignificance. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female ; but Christ is all and in all.

One thing more may be added, which ought also to be always taken into the account, in the exercise of the Christian ministry. The preacher, in speaking of faults and temptations, should not be supposed to have gained his knowledge of them only from the characters of others ; if he be commonly honest, and commonly in earnest, his own heart must have afforded him some of his best lessons. Where indeed can we, any of us, learn so truly the strength of temptation, and man's weakness ; where can we so well have understood the dangers of youth, and the dangers of manhood, as by studying our own souls, and dwelling upon the records of our own experience ? And if it be thought that we cannot dare to preach against faults of which we may be conscious ourselves, and that, therefore, we must be thinking only of our neighbours,—he who so judges, judges either most hardly of human weakness, or most unworthily of the Christian minister's office. Most hardly of human weakness, if he expects the knowledge and consciousness of sin to be the same thing as the victory over it ; most unworthily of the Christian minister's office, if he thinks that, in this place, the weakest may not speak with something of his Master's power ; and, however in himself insufficient, that he may not have gained ample sufficiency for Christ's sake, to speak Christ's message.

And now I may resume my proper subject, and proceed to the full consideration of the first of the three lessons which Christ's conduct, as described in the text, affords us;—the lesson of zeal in the discharge of our daily duties. “For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”

There are some dispositions, which, from absolute indolence, seem to be zealous about nothing whatever;—persons who appear neither to care about business or pleasure, who cannot be roused to take an active interest in any thing. These are characters which exist, and which we must all have sometimes met with: but they are not common, neither are they very dangerous, because the general feeling of men is apt to despise them as stupid and insensible. A much more common case is that of persons who like some things exceedingly, and are all alive when they happen to be engaged in them; but who do not like their common employment, and display about that no interest at all. This is a very common case, for it rarely happens that our employment is the very one which we should most choose,—or the one which we most choose at this particular time, or under these particular circumstances. And yet if it be not, even although we may not dislike it in itself, we may dislike it in comparison with what we like better;—and this, for all the purposes of destroying

our interest in it, is nearly the same thing as if we disliked it in itself. For instance, we all know that the expectation of any great pleasure is apt to unsettle our minds : although our work may commonly interest us tolerably, yet now, with this prospect before us, it seems dull and tiresome ;—we regard it merely as a burden, and grudge every hour that we give to it. So then, it seems that we must all expect to have our work often disagreeable to us, and that in many cases it is always disagreeable ;—disagreeable I mean by nature, and speaking according to common notions. But to say that a man can do heartily what is disagreeable to him, is to talk of impossibilities ; he can no more do it than he can have an appetite for nauseous food : he will attend to what he dislikes no more than he can help ; and, so far from following it up so earnestly as to allow himself no leisure so much as to eat, he will be glad of every excuse, and enlarge as much as possible upon the claims of his health, his strength, and his reasonable liberty, in order to abridge to the utmost the time which he cannot altogether refuse, to what he knows to be the call of duty.

It may be said then, that I have given the idle all the excuse they can desire ; for I say that no one *can* do heartily what is disagreeable to him, and they will maintain very truly that their daily employment *is* disagreeable to them.

I know that it is so;—but it does not follow that it must always *remain so*. True it is, that we cannot do heartily what we dislike; but it is no less true, that we may learn if we will to like many things which we at present dislike: and the real guilt of idleness consists in its refusal to go through this discipline. I might speak of the well-known force of habit, in reconciling us to what is most unwelcome to us;—that by mere perseverance what was at first very hard, becomes first a little less so, then much less so, and at last so easy, that according to a well-known law of our faculties, it becomes a pleasure to them to do it. But, although perseverance will certainly do this, yet what is to make us so persevering?—if we go through this discipline it will cure us, but what can engage us to give it a fair trial? And here it is that I would bring in the power of Christ's example;—here it is that the grace of God through Christ will give us the victory. "Christ pleased not himself;"—"Christ allowed himself no leisure so much as to eat." For what did He do this, and for whom? For our salvation, and for our spirits' sakes, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And who was He who so denied Himself? The Son of God, the heir of all things; even He by whom all things were created, and by whose providence they are sustained. Yet He would not allow Himself fully

to use them, but thought it his meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish his work. And who are we who do not deny ourselves? His creatures, who owe everything to his goodness, and yet day by day are unworthy of it; his creatures, who, with no right to so much as the crumbs under his table, think it hard if we cannot sit down and rest and enjoy, under circumstances in which He never rested;—his creatures, who offending Him every hour, are yet impatient of anything but pleasure at his hands;—who, with so much of that guilt for which He was pleased to be crucified, are yet unwilling to submit to that discipline, which his pure and spotless soul endured cheerfully for no need of his own, but for our sakes.

Alas! this touches us all, young and old alike: we may not well find fault with others in this matter; but we may and must speak of it to them as their heinous sin against God, from which would to God that we were any of us wholly clear. Indeed, my brethren, we too early gain, we too fondly cling to the notion, that we come into this world to seek our happiness in it. Too large a proportion of our fellow-creatures are cured of this error by necessity;—there are too many who are taught by early and excessive labour, and by greater suffering than ever self-denial would impose upon them, that this world is for them at least no place of

enjoyment. Their over labour doubly shames our over indulgence. But the truth which they cannot but learn, we must learn also, or we perish for ever. If we make this life what Christ will not have it be,—if where we should labour, we presume to rest,—where we should deny ourselves, we revel in enjoyment,—we at once wrong our poorer brethren and insult Christ; we laugh in fact at his view of human life, at his constant exertion, and his self-denial;—we think that we judge more wisely in pleasing ourselves, and snatching our joys while we may. If we are right, then indeed his example was needless; but, if that example were given as our pattern,—if as He was, so should we be in this world;—if He Himself was made perfect through suffering, and entered not into glory without first suffering pain,—what will become of us, if unpurified and unsanctified, with no labour of love done, with all Christ's labour and sufferings despised as thankless, we offer ourselves for entrance into that eternal kingdom where none but his redeemed can enter? What will become of us, if, enjoying when we should be labouring, and thinking of our pleasure instead of doing his will, we were to hear his summons at the door? Would He, will He, find us watching when He calls;—faithful stewards of his gifts, each in our several station doing the work of his house,

with loins girded about and lamps burning? Blessed be our portion if He does; but if otherwise,—if eating and drinking, injuring our fellow-servants, and despising Him,—we know what will be our portion; we know that we shall call on the rocks to fall on us, rather than meet his presence then.

SERMON XXIII.

LUKE V. 29.—*And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.*

THE text on which I have been speaking for the two last Sundays, describes our Lord as continually surrounded by a multitude of persons who were constantly coming and going,—a moving crowd, full of curiosity to hear a prophet of whom they had heard so much, and hoping, too, to see some of his wonderful miracles performed before them. The verse which I have now chosen from St. Luke shows Him nearly in the same situation: He was a guest at a great feast, at which a great company of publicans and others sat down with Him. And we see, from what immediately follows, of what sort of character were many of the persons thus assembled; because the Pharisees directly asked our Lord's disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

No doubt, in some respects, our Lord's peculiar character as a prophet makes his example somewhat different from the case of common persons. He is not mentioned as doing many

things which we, in the mere discharge of our common duties, not only may, but must do. We cannot, nor ought we, in a literal sense, to *go about* doing good; we have our own homes, and our own settled callings; and it would be only producing wild confusion, if we were all to think of deserting them. Yet still our Lord's example is applicable to us all, more or less: it teaches us what sort of employment is always, perhaps, so far as we can pursue it, the most useful to our souls; it shows us, at any rate, what business there is which we can none of us safely neglect altogether; for that which Christ did *always*, Christ's servants cannot certainly be justified if they *never* do. And this business consists in mixing with others, not in the mere line of our trade or calling, and still less for mere purposes of gaiety; but the mixing with others, neither for business nor yet for pleasure, but, in the largest sense of the word, for *charity*.

It will, then, be seen how many persons there are who have need to be reminded of this duty. They who really live mostly to themselves are, indeed, in these days very few; and embrace only that small number of persons whose time is principally spent in study; that is, men who are devoted to literature or science. But those who, while they mix with others, yet do it in the line of their business, or for pleasure's sake, include a very large portion of the world indeed.

Statesmen, lawyers, soldiers, sailors, tradesmen, merchants, farmers, labourers, all are necessarily brought much into contact with their fellow-men ; there is no danger of their living in loneliness. And persons of no profession, the young, and women of all ages, in the richer classes especially,—they, too, desire society for the pleasure of it ; they think it dull to live out of the world. Yet it is very possible that neither of these two large classes of people may mix with others in the way that Christ mixed with them ; they may do it for business or for pleasure, but not for *charity*. And I said that I used the word *charity* in its largest sense, meaning by it, “a desire to do good to others in body or soul ;” for it is by no means right to confine it to that narrow sense only, in which it merely means, “relieving the bodily wants of the poor.”

To those then who are not inclined to be idle,—but who, whether from necessity or from activity of mind, are sure to have plenty of employment ; nay, who may be so much engrossed by it that it leaves them, as was the case with Christ, “no leisure so much as to eat,”—it becomes of great consequence, not only that they should be as busy as Christ was, but that part of their business, at least, should be of the same kind ; not only that they should be fully employed, but that their employment may, in part at least, be of that sort, as, when they fail, may

cause them to be received into everlasting habitations.

A vast field of consideration here opens before us; as vast, indeed, as the various situations which men fill in the world, and the various ways in which they may do works of charity. But it will be better, perhaps, to choose such points, out of the multitude which might be noticed, as seem most likely to suit our particular circumstances here.

With us, either at this moment, or in a succeeding part of our lives, labour is likely to take the form of reading or study. Our notions of work are mostly connected with books: if our employment be at any time so great as to shorten our hours of food and rest, it will generally be the employment of our intellects. Our station in life makes this to be particularly our case; and the state and tendencies of the world around us, will make it still more so. What was accounted great learning some years ago, is no longer reckoned such; what was in the days of our fathers only an ordinary and excusable ignorance, is esteemed as something disgraceful now. In these things, as in all others, never was competition so active,—never were such great exertions needed to obtain success. Those who are in the world know this already; and if there are any of you who do not know it, it is fit that you should be made aware of it. Every

profession, every institution in the country, will be strung up to a higher tone: examinations will be more common and more searching; the qualifications for every public, and profitable, or honourable office, will be raised more and more. All this *will be*, certainly, and no human power can stop it: and I think also, that it ought to be. Undoubtedly, knowledge is good, and in the general improvement of our faculties, I know not where we ought to desire to stop. I know not that our bodies can be too strong and active;—I know not that our knowledge can be too extensive, or our perception of truth too clear. But, “every thing in its own order.” While pursuing so hard a course of study,—while apt to be so engrossed with these exercises of the intellect,—while the leaves of the tree are growing out into such beautiful luxuriance,—what is to become of the fruit? What is to become of that part of us which is fitted for more than earthly happiness; to which Christ has offered and opened the ability to be for ever happy, to be loved by God, and to love Him eternally? There are two parts of our nature, which are, in a manner, the very seed of eternal life:—our feelings of humility and love. What will become of us, if the strong and intense pursuit after intellectual excellence smother these? We know that “knowledge is power,” and that the consciousness of power is most apt to engender

pride; nay, in all but God, it is pride already, if it be not tempered with the consciousness of weakness. But this sense of weakness is least of all present to strong minds when employed in study. While acutely discovering truth, or eloquently enforcing it, they feel a great power within them; a power which common men do not possess, and which, like all other rare qualities, the multitude who have it not themselves admire. This naturally feeds pride, and so stifles humility: and the same thing is likely to happen with charity. In reading we are of necessity much alone: and in reading, also, by the very nature of the case, the understanding, and not the affections, is exercised. To think, is something essentially different from to love. Thus we lose our sympathies with our fellow-creatures, and live in a little world of our own, in which self is ever predominant. We think of others only as rejoicing in our exaltation above them; or, at best, in our power of enlightening them. And we may enlighten them, and may minister to their good, by teaching them many useful truths; but what becomes of our own souls the while? Are they growing up unto eternal life, increasing more and more in the fruits of the Spirit, in faith and love, in peace and joy? Or, may not our case be like Balaam's, who, after having taught Balak the very sum of wisdom—when he declared to him

that man's duty "was to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God,"—yet himself lived in sin; and though he had prayed that his latter end might be that of the righteous, yet it was, in truth, that of the wicked: he died with the enemies of God.

It is here, then, that we may derive such immense benefit from following Christ's example,—from taking care to mix habitually with our fellow-creatures, not only for our business or our pleasure, but for charity. No good is done or can be done, when, from his solitary reading, a man only comes forth for a while into what is called brilliant or agreeable society; or into that which deserves only a lower and a fouler name—the society of sensuality and riot. In the first case, the same evil spirits of pride and selfishness which had been with him in his lonely chamber, again haunt the man in the halls of gaiety; in the other case, the spirit of pride is but relieved for a time by the spirit of drunkenness or uncleanness. This is not the intercourse with our fellow-creatures which is to do us good; this is not to follow Christ's example. We dare not, in this case, trust ourselves in the society of publicans and sinners: we should not do good to them, but they would rather infect us with their own evil. But the natural remedy for our peculiar dangers, the way in which we can best mix with our brethren for the nourishing of our

affections, is to be found in the intercourse with our own families on the one hand, and with the poor on the other. I cannot but think that, in the former of these points, a most evil habit has of late years grown up amongst young men when engaged in reading; I mean, that of going away from their homes, and fixing themselves, for three or four months, in some remote part of the country, where they may study without interruption. It may be, that more is thus read than would be read at home, though scarcely more than might be; but, even supposing it to be so, it is a dangerous price that is paid for it. The simple quiet of a common family circle, the innumerable occasions of kindness that it affords, and its strong tendency to draw away our thoughts from self, and to awaken our affections for others,—a discipline precious at every period of life,—can then least of all be spared, when the hardinesses of the world are just coming upon us, when our studies, and even our very animal spirits, are all combining to make us selfish and proud. Nay, at such a time, and to persons whose minds are strongly occupied with the excitement of reading, the mere commonplace society which most men meet with in the neighbourhood of their own homes, is capable of becoming highly useful. When the Psalmist said that he did not occupy himself with great matters which were too hard for him, but that

he refrained his soul and kept it low, he expressed most wisely his sense of the fact, that we must not feed our minds always with great and high thoughts, but that the common trifling interests and conversation of every-day society, are, in their turn, a most wholesome variety. I have often thought that what is sometimes charged as a defect on such society,—that it dwells too much upon personal and individual topics, upon the conduct and affairs of those immediately around us,—is capable of becoming most useful to him who regrets his own want of interest in the common matters of life, and with whom himself and his own pursuits and labours occupy too large a share of his attention.

But, besides this wholesome intercourse with our own families, another way of mixing with our brethren, in a manner most especially pleasing to Christ and useful to ourselves, is by holding frequent intercourse with the poor. Perhaps, to young men of the richer classes, there is nothing which makes their frequent residence in large towns so mischievous to them, as the difficulties which they find in the way of this intercourse. In the country, many a young man knows something, at least, of his poorer neighbours; but, in towns, the numbers of the poor, and the absence of any special connexion between him and any of them in particular, hinder him, too often, from knowing anything

of them at all : an evil as much to be regretted on the one side as the other ; and which is quite as mischievous to the minds and tempers of the rich, as it is to the bodily condition of the poor.

I can imagine hardly anything more useful to a young man of an active and powerful mind, advancing rapidly in knowledge, and with high distinction either actually obtained, or close in prospect, than to take him—or much better that he should go of himself—to the abodes of poverty, and sickness, and old age. Every thing there is a lesson ; in every thing Christ speaks, and the Spirit of Christ is ready to convey to his heart all that he witnesses. Accustomed to all the comforts of life, and hardly ever thinking what it would be to want them, he sees poverty and all its evils ; scanty room, and, too often, scanty fuel, scanty clothing, and scanty food. Instead of the quiet and neatness of his own chamber, he finds, very often, a noise and a confusion which would render deep thought impossible ; instead of the stores of knowledge with which his own study is filled, he finds, perhaps, only a Prayer Book and a Bible. Then let him see,—and it is no fancied picture, for he will see it often, if he looks for it,—how Christ is to them that serve Him wisdom at once, and sanctification, and blessing. He will find, amidst all this poverty, in those narrow, close, and crowded rooms,—amidst noise and disorder,

and, sometimes, want of cleanliness also,—he will see old age, and sickness, and labour, borne not only with patience, but with thankfulness, through the aid of that Bible, and the grace of that Holy Spirit who is its author. He will find that while *his* language and studies would be utterly unintelligible to the ears of those whom he is visiting, yet that *they*, in their turn, have a language and feelings to which he is no less a stranger. And he may think too,—and, if he does, he may for ever bless the hour that took him there,—that, in fifty years or less, *his* studies and all concerned with them will have perished for ever, whilst their language and their feelings, only perfected in the putting off their mortal bodies, will be those of all-glorified and all-wise spirits, in the presence of God and of Christ.

Nor is this most profitable duty of visiting the poor, as I have said on former occasions, one which you can only practise hereafter, and which does not concern you here. Those who really think of their own souls, and who are desirous of improving them, would find that even here it is by no means impossible. It would indeed be a blessed thing, and would make this place really a seminary of true religion and useful learning, if those among us who are of more thoughtful years, and especially those who are likely to become ministers of Christ hereafter, would remember that their Christian education has

commenced already, and that he cannot learn in Christ's school who does not acquaint himself something with the poor. Two or three at first, five or six afterwards,—a very small number might begin a practice, which, under proper regulation, and guided by Christian prudence, as well as actuated by Christian love, would be equally beneficial to the poor and to yourselves. Depend upon it, the time must come, and come speedily, when the spirit of the schools of the prophets, such as we read of in Israel in old times, must be revived amongst us here, or a worse fate than that of Jerusalem will be ours. If such were the case, if young men here remembered that they were preparing to become, some ministers of Christ, and all his servants,—and if, therefore, they would begin even here, to practise Christ's lessons, and to follow Christ's example,—I should not dread, but fully rejoice in the highest exertion of their intellectual powers; and a blessing, both on themselves and others, would come upon that pursuit of truth which did not exclude humility, and ministered to the purposes of charity, and to the service of Christ.

SERMON XXIV.

1 PETER V. 6, 7.—*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

WE read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it became Him, for whom and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. And again it is said of Christ, that because “he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that, therefore, God also has highly exalted him, and has given him a name which is above every name.” So also when James and John besought Him, that they might sit, the one on his right hand, the other on his left, in his kingdom, his answer was, “Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized with?”—meaning, that if they would be like Him in his glory, they must first be like Him in his sufferings; that they must, in short, “through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Now all these passages agree with the text in this, that they all speak of good things coming after trouble: they do not allow us to suppose that our course from our birth to

eternity is to run all smooth. And though all these passages naturally receive a deeper colouring from outward circumstances ;—that is, though the persecution which daily beset the first Christians, and the general calamities which befell the whole Christian world at the downfall of the Roman empire, would make men, living at those particular times, feel the truth of these passages more keenly ;—yet they serve no less for seasons of calm than of storm ; they should remind us in what manner we ought to look upon life beforehand, without being forced to do so, whether we will or no, by the pressure of outward misery.

I dwelt last Sunday upon imitating Christ, so far as it was possible, in the particular sort of employment which He chose,—namely, in the mixing with other men, neither for business only, that is, in the way of our calling,—nor yet for pleasure only, that is, in common society,—but for charity in its largest sense, that is, from a desire to do good to the bodies or souls of others. And now, taking the words of my present text, I will show how this Christ-like employment is most suited to our state on earth, as one of humiliation, leading hereafter to glory ; and how it specially helps us to make that state happy, by enabling us to rid it of its carefulness, by casting all our care upon God, for He careth for us.

Half, and more than half, of the practical faults in the world, arise from looking upon life in a false view, and expecting from it what God does not mean us to find in it. It may be that many persons, when reading attentively our Lord's life, and studying his language, are greatly surprised at the absolute unworldliness of both of them. Little stress is laid upon common industry, or upon our duties to society, whether on a smaller scale or politically. Little or nothing is said of the pursuit of knowledge, or the benefit which mankind derive from a cultivation of the arts and sciences. Nay, in those well-known expressions in the Sermon on the Mount, telling us to take no thought for the morrow what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, I doubt not but that many readers, if they would own the truth, are rather offended at his words, and are somewhat inclined to say, with the Jews of old, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" But He to whom all things future are as present, suited both his life and his words to what He knew would be ever the chief error of mankind. He knew that social and civil activity were sufficiently natural to man to need no encouragement: He knew that knowledge would be pursued, and arts and sciences cultivated. But He knew that the kingdom of God and his righteousness would not be sought after; He

knew that men would look carefully enough on the things of this life, but would care for little beyond it. And, coming as He did to bring immortality to light, and to open the kingdom of heaven, he dwelt strongly upon the wholly different complexion which the opening of this prospect threw upon our earthly life, and how it changed it at once from a thing complete in itself, to a mere and most insignificant beginning of eternity; how it made that so valuable which could help us forward to our real and eternal life, and that so trifling, when received in faith, which can but give joy and sorrow for a moment.

For ourselves then, and for our children, life is before us as a trial-time of uncertain length, but short at the longest, in which we may fit ourselves, if we will, for an eternal life beyond it. This is life to each of us, and this is our proper business; all the rest that we do, or can do, however splendid, however useful, is, or should be, done only subordinately. We may be thankful to God when He makes our training for eternity consist in the doing great and useful actions, in bringing forth much fruit; but we, each of us, are doing our business as thoroughly, are answering as completely the purposes for which *we* were sent into the world, if we are laid for years of our life upon a bed of sickness, incapable of any further action than that of glorifying God, and perfecting our own souls,

by patient love. The welfare of nations, the improvement of the world on a large scale, are, if I may use such an expression, God's object and God's business; and thankful and happy we may be when, by the particular call of his providence, He chooses us to be his honoured instruments in accomplishing his work. But yet we should rejoice with trembling, lest, while thus engaged in what I have ventured to call God's peculiar work, we may chance to neglect our own; while preaching or ministering to, or enlightening, or governing others, we ourselves should be castaways. It is not, therefore, true that our great business or object in the world is to do all the good we can in it: our great business and object is to do God's will, and so to be changed through his Spirit into his image, that we may be fit to live with Him for ever. His will is declared to us by the course of his providence, putting us into different situations of life where different duties are required of us: but these duties are duties because they are his will; and if performed without reference to Him,—if done for worldly objects only, be they ever so extensive and beneficial,—if done solely to improve mankind, and not to do the will of our heavenly Father,—then our great business in life is left undone, and the most helpless sufferer who has been bedridden for years, or the child who has been called away after the first opening

of its heart to the love of God, has spent life better, and better answered the end for which he was born, than we.

And it is manifest, that to keep this end steadily in view is a wonderful means of ridding life of its carefulness. If to be useful in our generation simply be our main object, our happiness cannot but greatly depend upon outward circumstances. Our own weakened health, the failure of our faculties, the decay of our worldly prosperity, the state of other men's minds, and the condition of public affairs, may at any time cripple our usefulness, and defeat our object at the very moment when we thought ourselves sure of obtaining it. And the prospect of death, in the vigour of his years, to a man engaged in some long and important work, which he feels would be useful to mankind if he could accomplish it, is one of the severest trials to him if he does not remember what his real business in life is, and when he may feel that it is accomplished. Most painful would it be to be taken away from the harvest when his hand was just upon the sickle, if he did not think who was the Lord of that harvest, and to whom it belonged to find the reapers for it. But when we do think of all this, and recollect what is indeed our real business here, we cast at once all our care upon God, and resign ourselves contentedly to his disposal. Then we can never feel to die

prematurely, never think that our labour has been in vain in the Lord, how little soever may be the earthly fruit of it. Contented to live, and thankful to die, happy in having been the instrument of good, satisfied in the failure of his efforts that his work has yet not been thrown away, as far as concerns its main object, such a man is indeed taking life rightly; and all its changes, be they what they may, are to him working together for good.

Now it is with reference to this view of life especially that Christ's particular employment, the mixing with others, not for business or for pleasure, but to do them good, is so exceedingly useful. In direct personal intercourse with our neighbours, when this is borne in mind, every day's work is complete in itself,—every day secures actions for comfortable memory here, and for a blessed account hereafter. Here, in truth, we may feel that the word is very nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, that we may do it. It is surprising how much pleasure may thus be given every day, how much suffering relieved, and how much good done. Unlike the more laborious enterprises of human life, where the previous time and exertion is often almost wasted, if we are by any circumstances hindered from completing them, in these daily charities the seed is no sooner sown than the harvest is gathered, and the fruit stored away in security.

In such a course of life, sufficient for the day is the good thereof, no less than the evil.

But now, it may be asked, How can we secure such a life? We are engaged in various worldly occupations, which are undoubtedly our immediate and most particular duties,—which take up the greatest portion of our time, and oblige us many times to provide for the future, to live for much more than for the day. I said, in my former sermon, that we cannot, indeed, imitate Christ exactly in this point, but that we must find opportunity to do sometimes what He did always. The opportunities, of course, will vary greatly; and while, in some situations, like that of a clergyman with the care of a parish, Christ's employment may actually be ours, and our main business is just the same as his was,—yet in other professions and situations of life it is not so; and the opportunities for following his example must be carefully treasured up whenever they do occur, and multiplied by our own watchfulness. But, in whatever station or employment, we must find them or make them, if we would not deprive ourselves of what may well be called the salt of our daily living. We must, if we would keep ourselves unspotted from the world, acquaint ourselves with the dwellings of the poor. I do not say that we are all of us, and especially the very young, to go to them always with spiritual addresses:—all are not

fitted to give medicine for the soul, any more than medicine for the body ; and, to say nothing of the great disorder and irregularity of every man taking up the minister's part, there are a great many who would not at all know how to do it. But good may be done both to mind and body, and infinite good done to our own souls, without interfering either with the duty of the minister, or with that of the physician. To ourselves, it is a great benefit to learn really what poverty is,—to see how it is borne, and to think, as we must think, how hard we should find it ourselves to bear it. To the poor, on the other hand, nothing is more welcome, nothing more soothing, than the mere proof of our interest in them, and Christian regard to them. We need not go with alms always, and it is far better that we should not ; but out of mere friendliness,—to vary the sameness of a life which has far less of variety and amusement than our own,—to listen to their stories—to open their hearts to kindness, when the hardships of life may have well nigh utterly hardened them. Nor do I say that even this could be done generally with propriety by young boys here ; but, at the same time, there is no boy so young as not to be concerned in what I have been saying : for, if not here, there is scarcely one of you who might not begin the practice of becoming acquainted with the poor under the

care of your friends at home ; and of thus learning, when here, to leave off every kind of wrong or insult to them, such as you know are sometimes committed. And certainly, as I said before, those among you of more age and experience might do more ; and, without stepping in the slightest degree beyond what is proper and becoming, you might find opportunities, even here, of doing, in this manner, much good to others, and much, very much more, to yourselves.

But God does more for us even than this. He enables us, if we choose, to make a great deal even of our common intercourse with others, —an imitation of Christ's life, and an improvement to our souls. And here, at least, we all have our opportunities, unless we choose to neglect them. Even at the marriage feast at Cana, even at supper in the Pharisee's house, or when talking with the woman of Samaria, who came to draw water at Jacob's well, did Jesus glorify his heavenly Father. So too may we glorify Him, not only in our visits to the poor, but in our intercourse with those of our own station ; not only in more solemn occasions, but in our business, and in our intercourse of common civility. At school, in your common dealings with one another, how much rudeness and unkindness, and encouragement of evil and discouragement of good, would instantly be done

away, if as Christ was, so were you in this world! How much happiness would be occasioned, where there is now, perhaps, only uncomfortableness; how many silent lessons of good would be conveyed, where evil is now taught so carelessly! And, in later life no less, how much proud or angry excitement,—how much mortified feeling, or encouraged vice, or folly, would be softened, and soothed, and chastened down,—if we mixed with each other, in the common course of life, with something of the spirit of Christ! As things now are, not only business but pleasure itself is often a weariness: we cannot take part in either without the tone of our minds being too often either hardened or irritated; the peace of the Spirit is not with us when the work of the day is over. It is useless, and not altogether true, to say, that the fault of this is in others: others may be faulty, and, doubtless, are so;—but how little would their faults affect us, if they were met by nothing bad within our own bosoms! For even supposing our charity to be ever so lively,—if we felt even as Christ felt for the evil of others, and for the ruin which they were bringing on themselves by it,—and if we were wearied by it as He was, when He cried, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?”—yet still, this sorrow and this weariness are not inconsistent

with that peace of the Spirit which Christ gives, and which He himself declared to be far different from that which "the world giveth." It would be a sorrow and a weariness that would rather turn us more heartily to God, than a restlessness which makes us shrink from Him. It would only make us long the more for that rest that remaineth for the people of God, and not drive us back to wander after our own ways in this world's wilderness.

Such, then, is Christ's daily lesson to us: not to be idle or slothful in our work; and to sanctify it by doing it as to Him, and not as to man. Not to be idle,—as those who have mere bodily faculties, who live only to eat, and drink, and sleep; not to be too busily and carefully engaged in our own labour, and still less for its own sake, as those who lived only for themselves, and for this world,—and to whom God, and Christ, and eternal life, had never been made known. Let us work earnestly,—for so did Christ; but let us work also as doing God's will, and for the improvement of our own souls, or else our work will not be such as He will acknowledge at his coming.

SERMON XXV.

MARK VI. 31.—*And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.*

I AM now come to the conclusion of the subject which I have been dwelling on in my four last sermons. I said, that in the verse from which my present text is taken, there were three things deserving of our separate attention:—first of all, Christ's constant diligence and activity: "they had no leisure so much as to eat;" secondly, The nature of that employment: intercourse with other men, for the purpose of doing them good, in body or soul; and, thirdly, His thinking it right, from time to time, to have intervals of rest:—"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." And, with respect to this latter point, I said that we knew from other places how our Lord employed these periods of rest, and that although, as partaking of the bodily weaknesses of our nature, He may be supposed to have needed rest as we do, in its common and simplest sense, yet his conduct teaches us what further use may be made of such seasons, and how they may be improved to fit us for a renewal of work afterwards, by strengthening us, not only in body but in soul.

It is this last part of the subject which I have reserved for this present occasion; and I confess that I did so purposely because it suits our present circumstances so exactly, for just at this time there is one of these periods of rest going to commence for us; and we may well consider how we may turn it to some account. Six weeks, even to the youngest of us, are a longer term than we can afford to waste; they are a period, whose influence upon the character cannot go altogether for nothing. When I speak of not affording to waste them, I do not mean that we are wasting them if we are not going on in our common employments; but we are wasting them utterly if we think that we have nothing else to do in them than to enjoy ourselves to the utmost; if we fancy that we can safely dismiss all thoughts of duty, all recollection of the past, all regard for the future, and live as if all things around us would stand still while we were slumbering. Let us see how we may so sanctify the rest that is now coming to us, as that Christ may acknowledge it to be fit for his disciples; how we may so pass it, as to make it no less useful to us, in the highest sense, than any of our hardest hours of labour.

First, I will say plainly, that the period on which we are going to enter, is intended for our rest, in the simplest sense; it is meant as a relief and relaxation from our common labour.

According, then, to the degree of exertion that we may have made here, is our greater or less title to it; for it is absurd to talk of rest where there has been no labour to call for it. In this sense, to those who have been idle here, it is like a pleasure which they have no right to; a reward which they have not earned; and which they are doubly bound to use well when they have got it, as their having it at all seems more than they deserve. I mean, that when a boy feels that he has been idle here, he must feel that it is foolish for him to talk about its being fair for him to enjoy himself when he is at home; he must know, that, as a mere matter of fairness, he has no right to enjoyment, since he did not choose before to work. But it is not uncommon to hear even those boys who have done little or nothing when at school, speak as if they had earned their rest when at home, and as if they were hardly used, if called upon then to make any exertions: whereas, in truth, there are comparatively few who work so hardly here, as to *need* rest after it; as we shall see at once, if we consider the far harder labour which persons of the same age, in other situations of life, often have to endure. Indeed, even with those who work the hardest, the approaching period is more required for other objects, than as a mere rest from labour; and though, even in this respect, it is, no doubt, good for them, yet

there are other ends answered, or which might be answered by it, to render it much more valuable.

It may be said, however, that if the labour of school cannot in most cases be considered very great, yet that school is altogether a place of hardship and irksomeness in one way or another, and that therefore it may fairly be varied with seasons of greater indulgence. It is certain this doctrine is very much acted upon, as many parents seem to think that a boy can never be too much humoured, or have too many amusements, when he is at home, to make up for the restraints and the uncomfortableness which he is supposed to endure at school. And the things in which this indulgence is sometimes shown, are precisely such as to confirm a boy in his worst habits;—I mean, indulgence in eating and drinking, and in indolence, or rather in laziness. There is something shocking in seeing so sacred a name as home degraded by such low associations as these;—that it should be thought of as a place where a boy can get his appetite better pampered, and his laziness less disturbed. Some points indeed there are, in which home is fairly and properly a place of greater indulgence;—things, which so far from being low or degrading in themselves, are absolutely in their proper degree useful; but which we cannot allow here, because amongst so many,

it is impossible to keep them to their proper degree only. For these, home is the fit place; and, in this respect, one feels a pleasure in thinking that the restraints of school are taken off, because they can be taken off with propriety. But, besides these two sorts of home enjoyments, there is another which is, I believe, often keenly felt by young boys, and which may give us matter for useful reflection. In the two former cases, school cannot be different from what it is. We *ought not* to encourage boys in their love of eating and drinking, and in their indolence—we *cannot* here allow many of those amusements which may very fitly be given them at home, because they can be there separated from their evil. But the third point in which home is often found to afford so keen a contrast to school, is one in which school might and ought to alter itself. I mean the change which a boy now too often feels in the general treatment and disposition of those around him, in going from school home, or in coming from home to school. At home a boy meets with nothing but kindness;—it is not always well-judged kindness indeed, but still it is kindness:—his feelings and his comfort, far from being needlessly hurt or interfered with, are perhaps sometimes over-much consulted. It might be well, perhaps, if home and school could in this borrow something of each other: if there was

somewhat less of weak indulgence there, and less of roughness and want of consideration here. But our business is with ourselves; with the faults of school, and not with the faults of home. In some instances, indeed, all the discomfort of school has arisen, not from any necessary or useful strictness in the system, but from what is absolutely bad and mischievous;—I mean the unkindness and want of feeling among boys towards each other. It is my real belief, and it has often given me great pleasure to believe it, that there is as little of this evil here as anywhere;—and that instances of gross cruelty and ill-usage would be very contrary to the general practice and state of feeling here. Still, we cannot flatter ourselves that we have nothing in this matter to correct;—that there is not a good deal of coarseness and unkindness shown towards each other, which must make the contrast of the gentleness and kindness of home to many amongst us exceedingly delightful. I never can consider this as a light evil, let it be as common as it will: indeed, it is difficult to say, in whose case it is more injurious,—in his who is guilty of it, or in his who suffers from it. Undoubtedly, this is a matter in which you ought all to keep a jealous watch over your own conduct: and every one of authority or influence amongst you ought to keep watch over that of others too. You are not indeed

aware, perhaps, of all the pain which is given by it, and still less of the serious evil which it causes to the character. Impressions, at some periods of life, and in some minds, fade so quickly, that I verily believe many boys, when they are behaving with unkindness to others, absolutely forget how much they, a little while ago, suffered from the same treatment to themselves: and they have not perhaps thought or observed enough to know, how apt it is to harden the temper, and how a boy, finding himself teased, or laughed at, or ill-used, is driven at last, in a sort of self-defence, to check his own gentler and softer feelings, to answer ill usage with sullenness, and to endeavour to escape from the laughter of others, by turning it upon some new subject whose feelings are still more susceptible than his own.

In this, then, home may justly be considered a place of rest, and its influence upon the mind is often no less wholesome than it is delightful for the moment. And this leads me very naturally to consider the highest sense in which the approaching holidays may, and should be, a rest to us,—I mean, in the sense of rest from all those evils to which we are most exposed here. We know that “the rest which remaineth for the people of God” is especially a rest from sin;—a rest from evil without us, and still more from evil within our own hearts;—a rest of

happiness, because it is a rest of holiness. And the same was the higher object of the Jews' Sabbath,—and is the express and direct purpose of the Christian Sunday. Such, too, were those rests of our Lord,—such as that mentioned in the text; not, of course, that our Lord had in his own heart any sin to rest from,—but that his rests were used spiritually; were spent in prayer and communion with God, that his human nature might be the more abundantly strengthened for his work as a prophet. For this purpose it is most useful that you should go for a time to a place which, generally speaking, is more favourable to your moral improvement than school is, where you may not only leave off for a while your daily work, but much more may be removed from many daily temptations to evil; where you may not only enjoy more pleasure, but may get more good. You know full well in how many different ways opportunities are given you at home in a greater degree than here; how all good is, in a manner, made more easy to you. There you have no temptations to lie, and swear, and indulge in offensive language; on the contrary, the influence of other company makes itself felt immediately: and it is extraordinary how seldom a boy is betrayed, when at home, into a single instance of the same bad language, which here may be quite habitual to him. There you have no temptation to unkind-

ness, and little or none to bad company; but are amongst those whose behaviour to you is a continual provoking to love, and whose example, even though I well know how deficient the best human examples always are, is yet generally, as far as you are concerned, likely to be profitable. There too, you have great opportunity for learning that duty on which I have lately dwelt so much—the duty of personal intercourse with the poor. And there too, your religious exercises and feelings have far less to impede and thwart them, far more to encourage and cherish them. Here, if for a moment, whilst assembled in this place, a solemn impression is made on your minds, how apt is it to be dissipated so soon as you leave the chapel, by the very different society and language which immediately surround you. And, let us do what we will, how can we render the Sunday evening here, such as you find it in a well-ordered family at home; when all the good thoughts that the public worship may have awakened in the morning are confirmed by the family worship in the evening; when the Lord's day proceeds from beginning to end in one consistent tenour, and pours its whole influence upon the mind unmixed with any alloy of evil! Surely, to such of you as have such homes, this approaching time may be, indeed, a season of Christ-like rest—a season in which you may draw in strength of soul, much more than of

body, for the time of your return here. And even those whose home is far different from this picture, nay, if there be any so unhappy as even in your own household to have none to help you forward in the knowledge and love of God, yet even you will have some opportunities more than you enjoy here,—greater leisure with less of rude interruption; and even if you have no encouragement in good, you can, at least, dread no persecution for it. And remember too, that this is a matter of life and death: and though, if your homes be so unhappily situated, your task is undoubtedly harder, yet still your salvation depends upon it; and the question is, not whether the path of good is easy or not, but whether we do tread it or no: this is the real question for this world and for eternity.

And now briefly for all of us here assembled, who are going so soon to part, never to be all again here united, may we, if we are enjoying the prospect of our approaching rest, in the common sense of the word, take care to make it a spiritual rest also; to use it for our good, as well as for our refreshment. We expect that it will be pleasant, but that does not rest with us to determine; we may at any rate make it profitable, for that, through Christ, we can do if we will. Those of us who return here, may return with a spirit strengthened and purified, to do God's will at school. Those who are going to

enter on another sphere of duty may well need some such interval of Christian rest, to prepare for a new line of Christian labour. These intervals will not always come so readily and so free from care in more advanced life, even though we may need them more. Would that we may feel God's goodness in granting such to us in our peculiar line of life here; and let us all pray earnestly, that He will give us grace to avoid the double condemnation which awaits those to whom much is given, and at whose hands their Lord, when He comes to reckon, finds no return.

SERMON XXVI.

EPH. V. 17.—*Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

IT is plain that when the Apostle bade the Ephesians not to be unwise, he spoke of a want of wisdom which they might remove if they would; when he told them to be understanding, he spoke of something which they might get if they would: and we also can get it, unless we can show that our case is different from that of the Ephesians, and that what was within their power is, for some reason or other, not in ours. I do not suppose that any grown-up person, at least among the richer classes, would venture to plead such an excuse: they, at least, cannot pretend to have less means of understanding what the will of the Lord is, than were possessed by the Ephesians. But young persons of all classes, and grown-up persons amongst the very poor, may think, perhaps, that to them the excuse does apply. A poor man will often say that he is no scholar, meaning by that, that he cannot understand about the things of Christ; and a young person, whether rich or poor, will say that he is not old enough, and that added years are necessary before he can understand what the Bible wishes him to learn.

Now certainly this excuse, both in the case of the poor and in that of the young, is to a certain degree true. To a certain degree it is true, that they cannot understand the things of Christ: that is, that if we take three persons equally well-disposed, and of equal natural abilities,—the one a grown-up man who has been well educated, the second a poor man, and the third one who has not yet grown up to manhood,—it is very certain that there is a great deal in the Bible which the first will understand better than the other two. And so, if we could compare the understanding of spiritual things enjoyed by the very best and wisest Christian in the world, with that which the same person will gain when he shall see God face to face, the difference would be not like that of the other case, but something infinitely greater;—greater, perhaps, than we can ever conceive, unless we shall be so happy as to experience it. But as a good man's understanding of God's will, though far less than it will be hereafter in heaven, is yet quite enough to light him on his way thither; so, and in a much greater degree, is the knowledge to be attained by the poor, or by the young, however in some respects inferior to that of others, yet quite as effectual as theirs to bring them to the kingdom of God through Christ Jesus.

To the youngest then, and to the poorest, we

may use the words of St. Paul: "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." From the youngest, and from the poorest, Christ looks to find some fruit; and if He finds none, the tree is ready to be cut down, and cast into the fire. They have, indeed, a great claim upon the assistance of all those who, from being richer or older, may be able to help them to understand more; but even if this assistance be withheld, or unskilfully given, however great the fault may be in those who do not afford it, yet this is no excuse for those who have not received it: because, if they could not bring forth much fruit, still they could have borne some; and where there is none at all, there will fall God's judgment. And this I suppose to be our Lord's meaning, when He said, that he who knew not his lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, should be beaten with few stripes. We might expect rather, that if he knew not his lord's will, he would not be beaten at all; but Christ meant to show us that there is no such thing as a complete and helpless ignorance about our duty: that a man may know little, it is true, but that there is no one who knows nothing; no one, in short, who knows so little as not to be deserving of punishment if he does not turn that little into more.

This is true to the utmost, as far as you are concerned: there is not one who hears me, let

him be as young as he will, who might not understand the will of Christ better than he does ; there is none who does not understand it well enough to make him deserving of God's punishment, for not turning his knowledge to better account. When you come to this chapel, there is not one of you who is excusable for not attending to what he hears ; there is not one of you who could not derive good from it. It may not, indeed, be easy for us to make our addresses to you as plain or as forcible as we could wish ; and, assuredly, it is our duty to labour as much as possible, that the few minutes, for it is hardly more, during which we speak to you from this place shall be turned to good account on our part ; but then, you must do your duty by yourselves, or else all that we can do for you is nothing ; you must try to learn, and to remember, and to put together what you hear. It is surprising how quick we learn things when we really go to work in earnest about them. Men thrown amongst foreigners, whose language they cannot understand, attend to every sound and look and gesture ; by the look or the sign they try to make out what the sound means, and if they hear it again, they catch at it as at something which they know, because they have learnt it before : and so every little that they do learn, being remembered and applied in its proper place, helps them on to learn more. If you

would do the same, even in a much lower degree,—if you would but think, that what is read to you, or told you, is read and told in order to be remembered,—that it ought to go into your minds, as so much secured for future use, and that when the time comes for using it, it is hard never to find it forthcoming,—you may depend upon it that what is read in this chapel, both the prayers, the lessons, and the sermons, would, in a short time, give you a very much fuller understanding than you now have of what the will of the Lord is.

But you have this understanding enough already to make you without excuse in the sight of God, if your lives bring forth no fruit. You have consciences within you, which tell you, in language which you cannot mistake, whether you are at peace with God, or no. If this be not quite clear,—for I would be understood by the very youngest among you,—I will put it in another way. You can tell well enough whether you like coming to chapel, or no ; whether you like to hear about God, or to think of Him, or to pray to Him. If you do not, cannot you tell why you do not ? If you could not think of the answer to this question yourselves, at least you will see that it is the true one when you hear me mention it. I will tell you why you do not like it : because you do not really believe how God loves you, and what He has

done for you. It is nothing but this: for if you really did believe that God was a dearer friend to you than all your relations,—that Jesus Christ has done more for you than they have, or ever could do,—and that God will give you better things than ever you have received, or can receive, from any one else,—it is quite certain that you would like very much to hear of Him, and to pray to Him: for praying to Him is nothing else than speaking to Him; and every one loves to speak to his best friend. Believe that God loves you, that He is more to you than father and mother,—and that when you go home to Him, it will be infinitely more happy for you than the happiest home to which ever boy returned from school,—and you would be as sure to love thinking and talking of Him, as you do now love to think and talk of the pleasures of your earthly home, when you are for a while released from school.

But you have seen your earthly home, and your earthly parents;—you know what its pleasures are, and what their love is; but of God and of heaven you can fancy nothing. True it is, indeed, in one sense, that neither you nor I (for in this we are all of us alike) can fancy distinctly the happiness of our eternal home, or the nature of our heavenly Father. It is natural to wish that we could. The Apostles wished it, when Philip said to Christ, “Lord,

show us the Father, and it sufficeth us ;"—the greatest of the prophets wished it, when Moses said to God, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." But this never has been granted, and never may be: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him ;" and the eternal Father, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, no man hath seen or can see. So, then, this difference must remain between our earthly and our heavenly homes,—our earthly and our heavenly Father,—that the one we have seen and can conceive ; the other we have not, neither can we. You know that the Bible speaks much of faith ; and this is the very meaning of faith,—to believe in and hope for that which we do not yet see or enjoy. But are there not pleasures of older life, even in this world, which you cannot now understand, but which you know are pleasures, and very real ones, because you see older persons heartily enjoying them ? You cannot enjoy nor understand these pleasures now, but you will when you are older ; so that there may be very great and very real happiness prepared for you, which you cannot at present at all conceive. And thus much in general :—but, to say the truth, something of the happiness of heaven, the very youngest of you can conceive, better perhaps

than even some of the pleasures of advanced years in the world. I will hope and believe, that every one of you has known some few happy moments in the course of his life, when he has felt the pleasure of sincerely endeavouring to be good ;—when, not only no bad passion was awake within him, but he was actually aware of the strong workings of good ones :—when he felt to love every one, and to try with all his heart to be what he ought to be. And if I am not mistaken, the moments when we have felt thus have been very often when we have committed some fault, and have been brought to a proper sense of it ; when we have been fully forgiven, and our hearts have been softened at once by the reproof and the pardon. I do think that every one of us, at some one time in his life, has been in this happy state ; and I should believe that the remembrance of it would rise within him, as of the greatest happiness that he ever knew. Now, in feeling thus, I may say it with reverence, we have felt for one little while something, in a very low degree, of that happiness which reigns in heaven for ever. That sincere turning away from sin, and longing after goodness,—that opening of the heart to all soft and kind affections, when we feel that we have been heartily forgiven,—that forgetfulness of self, and deep consciousness of love, which marked the moment of repentance,

however soon they again vanished,—these are among the pleasures of heaven; and of these, we have all,—I believe that I may say it, all,—at some time or other in our lives, tasted the sweetness.

But then, God,—He who is all in all in heaven,—Him we have not seen nor can conceive: how then can we love Him? If I were speaking to heathens, I should say, look round upon the works of his hands;—this most beautiful world, with all the millions of creatures to whom He has given life, and breath, and all things; with all the host of heaven, who move through infinite space, in obedience to his laws. I would say, read the lives and the words of good and wise men; see how good and noble thoughts have struggled victoriously against temptation; how self-denying virtue has wrought its perfect work, abundantly supported and blest, though all outward things were against it. I would say, look at these images, imperfect as they are, of God's power, and wisdom, and goodness; and think, from these faint shadows, how blessed it must be to know the substance. But I am not speaking to heathens, and I need not refer to these shadows; not to the outward world; not to the faint and most imperfect image of Him set forth by human virtue. We have got a truer likeness of Him, a perfect image: all the glory, all the goodness of God, is

revealed to us in the person of Christ. Have we been so long time with Him, and yet have we not known Him? He who hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father: how say we then, Show us the Father? Yes, in that life,—in those words,—in that blessed death and glorious resurrection,—there is the image of God revealed to us: he who hath the Son, he who knoweth the Son, he who loves Him, the same knows God, and loves Him, and is loved by Him."

And are you too young to understand this, too young to love God in Christ, too young to desire the happiness of heaven? No, not too young; and God grant that you be not too sinful; for, believe me, it is nothing but your sin that hinders you from understanding, and not your youth, or your want of ability. No, you are not too young; and you cannot, surely, be too hardened. Pray with me,—pray for me and for yourselves,—that we may none of us be too dull or too cold to understand what the will of the Lord is; none too hard to love Him and be loved by Him.

SERMON XXVII.

JOHN XI. 11.—*Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*

As, in everything else, men's tastes are different, so are they also with regard to the Scriptures. I mean, that amongst Christians,—all looking upon the Scriptures as their rule of faith and life,—there are particular passages which will most suit the wants of particular minds, and appear to them, therefore, full of an extraordinary measure of comfort and of wisdom. I am speaking, however, of persons who are in earnest, and not trying to cheat their own souls: for there may be persons who are most fond of the very parts which they need least,—that is to say, of the parts which condemn the faults to which they themselves are least inclined; and who turn away from those which contain a medicine for their own particular disease. But let a man deal with himself truly; let him know, as who does not know if he will but inquire, what are his own weaknesses, and what are the spiritual weapons which he most needs;—and then he will be better able to direct himself in reading the Bible profitably, than any other person can direct him.

So there are parts which one man may pass over lightly, and which, to another, may seem to be full of most particular beauty. And though he must not expect others to see in them all that he does,—nor make his own interpretation that which all others must follow,—yet as some may think and feel with him, and no man can be harmed by hearing another's views of the riches of God's word, if he does not seek to strain it into something foolish or mischievous, so I will venture to lay before you some of the thoughts which the words of the text have been apt to awaken in my own mind,—coming as they do from a part of the Scripture which seems to me one of the richest of all in wisdom, in comfort, and in raising our affections to God and to Christ.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” said our Lord; “but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” There seems to me to be contained in these few words one of the most powerful charms in the world to lull the bitterness of death, and to make us anxious to become such as that we may humbly venture to apply them to ourselves. What would we, each of us, give, when our last hour was come, to feel that Christ would so speak of us?—“Our friend sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” Yet this is the language in which Christ does speak of every one who has died in his faith

and fear,—in which He will speak of us, if we do not so live as to shut ourselves out from his salvation.

“Our friend sleepeth.” How much is there in these three simple words! Christ speaks of Lazarus as his friend; and St. John tells us that He loved him and his sisters. But the title is not reserved for Lazarus only: “Ye are my friends,” He says to his Apostles, “if you do whatsoever I command you.” It is not because they ate and drank with Him, and went about with Him: if it were, we could not, indeed, hope that the title would belong to us. But they were his friends, if they did whatsoever he commanded them; and this we can do now as entirely as they could. Christ, therefore, will call us his friends, as much as He did his first twelve disciples, as much as He did Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He told one of his Apostles, when He expressed his belief in Him after his resurrection, that he, indeed, because he had seen Him, had believed; but blessed were they who had not seen, and yet had believed. If there be a difference then, his promise is almost more gracious to us than to those who saw and knew Him on earth; we may be sure, that if we do whatsoever He commands us, He will quite as much call us his friends as He did them.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” The dis-

ciples could not understand that, by this gentle term, He could possibly mean a thing so fearful as death. They thought that He meant to speak only of sleep literally ; insomuch that Christ was obliged to express Himself in other words, and to tell them plainly, "Lazarus is dead." And in this we are all of us very like the disciples. We talk of another life, when we think it at a distance, but we have really got but a very little way towards overcoming our fear of death. We fear it very nearly, if not quite as much, as the heathen do. And this is so natural, that no mere words will ever get the better of it, unless we put ourselves in time into such a state of mind as may help us to see that the words are really nothing else but simply true. It is not by reading or repeating the words of Christ, that we can at once make them the food of our souls, and derive from them their full benefit. But still, here is the fact, that Christ does call the death of his friends a sleep ; and the same expression is used more than once by his Apostles and first disciples, in speaking of the deaths of true Christians. We may learn to make our own death such as to deserve the name ; we may, with God's blessing, even feel ourselves that it does deserve it. And this, without any distinction as to the manner of it, so far as regards its sharpness or easiness to the body. We know not, indeed, how Lazarus died, whether

it was by a death painful or easy ; but we do know how Stephen died,—of whom it is said, no less than of Lazarus, that “ he fell asleep.” We know that his death was sudden and violent ;—with much suffering of body,—and nothing, as far as human aid was concerned, to comfort his mind. He died, surrounded by his enemies, who looked upon him as a criminal and a blasphemer, and, as such, had no pity or sympathy for him. And yet, when he died, “ he fell asleep :”—all the bodily pain,—all the want of human sympathy and comfort,—all the suddenness of the wrench from life, in the midst of health and strength,—all this shall not prevent the Christian’s death from deserving no harsher name than that of sleep.

But what follows ? “ Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” May we believe Christ to say these words over every one of us, so soon as the breath is departed from our body : “ He comes to awake us out of sleep.” The time will seem no longer than the four days which passed before He awakened Lazarus : a thousand years are in his sight as but one day ; and when we have once done with earthly time, we may, perhaps, be able in some degree to reckon years as He does. But, assuredly, whatever be our state in the interval, we shall have no consciousness of his tarrying ; the weariness of expectation,

the longings of hope deferred, will have ended then for ever. He comes as in a moment, to awake us out of sleep; to a waking, which it is our best wisdom to endeavour humbly to dwell upon, however infinitely our highest aspirations may fall short of its reality. An end will then be put for ever to all those lingerings of unbelief which are here, perhaps, never altogether rooted out. God, whom we have sought after in some measure darkling;—whose presence, even in the best men, sometimes leaves them without any consciousness of it;—God and Christ will then be for ever with us, and we shall for ever feel that we are with them. Of all the thoughts that may rush into a Christian's mind, when at his last hour he utters his Lord's words, and says, "It is finished,"—of all the evil to which he then bids an everlasting farewell,—none would be remembered, I should imagine, with such deep joy and thankfulness at having escaped it, as our dark and imperfect sense of God, and of his love to us: no change will be so blessed, as that, from seeing Him in a glass darkly, to the seeing Him face to face.

I know that to young minds these thoughts are but little familiar; it seems strange to them to talk of leaving their earthly life when they are but just beginning it: and if such thoughts could only be felt when life in its natural course were drawing to an end, or when its

sorrows had made us wish that it were so, then indeed it would be vain to press them upon you in the midst of youth, and hope, and enjoyment. But there is no falser slander against the truth of God, than to represent those only as longing after or dwelling upon their eternal inheritance who, whether from years or from misfortune, have nothing more left to hope for here. By far the happiest persons I have known—and the experience of most other persons would, I think, say the same,—by far the happiest, both in their own minds and in their outward circumstances, with most blessings to enjoy in life, and hearts and spirits most alive to the enjoyment of them, have been persons to whom, as far as man can judge of man, the consciousness of their eternal inheritance was most continually present, and the prospect of being with God most intensely welcome. They had no more reason to think death near than you have; for you must be well aware that the charms of life are quite as strong in middle age as in early youth; and it is not more natural to think of the decay of our faculties when we are possessing them in all their vigour, than when they are not fully matured. In fact, the thoughts which I have dwelt on are the fit companions of our journey through life, and the earlier we take them up, the better. They must teach us to live first, or they will never teach us to die: and he who thinks them

fit only for a period of sickness, or sorrow, or for old age, is but putting them off to the very time when he will find it the hardest to derive any comfort from them.

For what is it, brethren? "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." They are, indeed, words of great comfort, words which it would be more than the value of all earthly things, that Christ should speak of each one of us when we are departed. But then, they are words which, if you were indeed near your latter end, it would be impossible to utter without the deepest fear and sorrow. What good would there be, in putting before you the picture of a blessing which you had forfeited; of reminding you of the happiness of that fortune which you had determined should not be your own? If you thought yourselves very near death, I do not say that these words could profit you nothing; but I may say, that, in all probability, they would be useless; doubtless, they might alarm you; they might make you think what provision you had made for your last great change; whether, indeed, you might dare to hope that Christ would speak of you, when dead, as of his friend who had fallen asleep, and whom He was presently coming to awaken. You might and would find, that your lamps were gone out, and would be anxious to lose no time in getting a

fresh supply of oil. "But while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut." They who *were ready* went in with him; not they, who, when it was too late, were trying to become so. Believe me, in those late turnings to God, death is apt to come quicker than repentance: you would be called to meet Christ as your Judge, ere you could venture to think that you might love Him as your Saviour: I say, "ere you could venture to think that you might love Him as your Saviour:" for we cannot love Him as such, till we learn to hate our sins; and this is far too hard a task to be learnt by enfeebled faculties, which, in so many years of their vigour, had been only learning and practising to love them. But to you, to all of us, I trust, here assembled, the words are not spoken too late. We may now make Christ our friend; nay, He entreats and calls upon us to suffer Him to be so. We may yet make our death a sleep, however sudden it may be, however deserted, however painful. We may yet so fall asleep in Christ, that we shall assuredly share in the promise which He made to Lazarus: He will come and awaken us out of sleep, that we may be where He is for ever.

SERMON XXVIII.

LUKE XVI. 8.—*The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

IT is a remarkable story told by the poet Cowper of himself, that when he was a young man, and living in London, where his companions were not only persons of profligate life, but of low and ungodly principles, they always had a great advantage over him when arguing upon the truth of Christianity, by reproaching him with the badness of his own life. In fact, it appears that his life at that time was quite as bad as theirs; and they used to upbraid him for it, telling him, that it would be well for him if they were right and he wrong in their opinions respecting the truth of the Gospel; for, if it were true, he certainly would be condemned upon his own showing.

We must not indeed call a man of evil life one of the children of light in the highest sense of the term: and yet in the sense in which our Lord uses it in the text, it does apply to any one who believes in his inward mind, that his obedience is due to Christ, however little his outward conduct may agree with such a belief. They are children of light as far as

God's mercy is concerned:—they have been chosen by Him to receive the knowledge of his Son; they have been called, and their understandings at least have listened to the call. They are children of light, then, in God's gracious purposes,—called, enlightened, redeemed;—what more could have been done to the vineyard that has not been done in it? but their own will makes them in the end the children of darkness; they are foolish persons, who take their lamps, but take no oil with them: they are the vine of God's husbandry,—planted, watered, fenced about from every enemy, and open to the full sunshine of his love; but when He looks that they should bring forth grapes, they bring forth wild grapes. These are the children of light of whom Christ speaks;—and well might He say, that the children of this world are in their generation far wiser.

This was what Cowper's unbelieving companions thought, when they taxed him with the folly and inconsistency of living like a heathen, and yet professing to believe as a Christian. They, on the other hand, were consistent enough: they believed of nothing more than this world, and accordingly they lived for this world only. But as far as this world was concerned, the happiness which they believed to be within their reach, they did their best to gain;—the misery which they supposed to threaten them,

they did their best to avoid. These men, like the unjust steward in the parable, had at least the merit of acting wisely upon their own view of the matter; they made the mammon of unrighteousness, that is, the riches and enjoyments of this world, serve their turn for all that they believed them capable of yielding. And, therefore, Christ makes their conduct a reproof to Christians, who do not make the world yield to them that fruit, which, according to their professed belief, it might afford them. So much are we accustomed to admire consistency of character, an adherence to principles, an acting uniformly and steadily on one regular system of conduct, that these qualities in vulgar estimation even throw a lustre upon crime, and have caused some of the most wicked men that the world has ever seen to be accounted amongst the greatest.

But if their presence almost seems to render vice respectable, what shall we say of the character in which they are wanting? and much more when it is the very character which would set them off, no less than be set off by them—a character in which their influence would be nothing but unmixed good? If consistency with our principles be in some sort admired even when they are evil,—if forethought cannot but exalt a human being, even when employing evil means to arrive at an evil end,—how can we

excuse inconsistency and blind thoughtlessness, when the principles which we swerve from are those of mere goodness,—when the end, which our forethought might compass, and the means for attaining it, are alike pure and spotless? This is the lesson which the parable of the unjust steward was designed to teach us, that nothing is more unworthy, nothing more ruinous, than to be a Christian by halves;—to begin to build, and not to be able to finish. Salt is good, but the salt that has lost its savour is good neither for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out: and even so vile and worthless is that Christian in name only, who does not live according to his own principles, but in defiance of them,—who, with a journey to an eternal state opened before him, plays away his time on the road, and makes no provision for the end of his pilgrimage.

We may be still the children of light; but if we so live, we are fast hastening to make ourselves the children of darkness: we are chosen by God to be the heirs of glory, but we ourselves choose rather to be the heirs of folly and destruction. And it is this conduct which, as I said before, the parable was designed to reprove. It reproves it by showing that the opposite to this careless folly,—the habit of laying down a settled principle for our living, of acting steadily according to this principle, and of taking care before-

hand that our chosen object in life shall never be lost to us,—that this habit, even when the principle is no better than self-interest, when the practice is wickedness, and the forethought for the security of our darling object is nothing but dishonesty and cunning,—still, is in itself so elevating, that even when thus grossly misapplied, it after all commands from ordinary men a considerable portion of respect. “The master of the unjust steward commended him because he had done wisely:” just as the language of common history commends the unjust stewards on a larger scale, who have steadily pursued, through all dangers and difficulties, the several objects of their ambition and vain glory. It is this steadiness of aim, this consistency between principles and practice, this range of forethought, this unwearied and undaunted perseverance, whose presence seems to make vice almost respectable: whose absence makes, I do not say virtue, for virtue cannot exist without it,—but mere good dispositions, good inclinations, and a knowledge of our real condition and duty, no better than contemptible and worthless.

I have purposely dwelt upon this subject with something of repetition, because experience has taught me that this one parable of our Lord’s is to many a stumbling-block, and to few so useful as it ought to be. People seem to fancy that

the unjust steward is held up as an object of imitation altogether:—that Christ Himself excuses his dishonesty for the sake of the wisdom of his conduct, as it is called;—that is, his steady regard to his own interests. Some of this arises from a mere mistake, and something also from an obscure, and therefore a bad translation. If those who have Bibles will just refer to the parable for an instant, they will be able to follow me better. In the eighth verse, where it says, “And the lord commended the unjust steward,” &c.,—some careless readers fancy that the “lord” means Christ;—whereas this verse is only a part of the story or parable;—Christ telling us that “the lord or master of the unjust steward commended him,” according to that common matter of fact to which I have already alluded, that men do often commend clever wickedness. Christ’s own application of the story begins in the next or ninth verse;—and here the translation is obscure, because the little word “of” in our common language now has another meaning from that which it had in the translator’s own time. “To make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,” an English reader naturally understands to mean, “to make the mammon of unrighteousness,” or “unrighteous riches,” our friends; whereas, the real meaning of the words is, “Make to yourselves friends with, or by the

mammon of unrighteousness ;"—*i.e.* "so use the riches and other advantages of this world, as that they may gain you friends hereafter,—friends that will stand by you, when the riches themselves shall have perished." And I hardly need add what these friends are,—the record of good done upon earth, of misery relieved, of folly enlightened, of virtue encouraged and supported ;—the record of *their* thankful voices, who, having received from us good things in this world, shall welcome us with thanks and blessings, when we all stand together before Christ's judgment-seat.

Such, then, is the parable ; and, indeed, I scarcely know any one throughout the New Testament whose lesson we need more strongly. It is the repetition of the complaint of Elijah : "How long halt ye betwixt two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him." If there be no God, no duty, no life to come,—then let us eat and drink, or follow what likes us best whilst we are here, for to-morrow we die. But if we do believe that there is a God,—if we know that duty is the very soul and life of our life,—if we hope to be for ever where Christ is gone to prepare a place for us,—then let us live consistently with these principles, and live not for our own pleasure, but for his who died for us and rose again. Always and everywhere as this requires to be

enforced, it requires it nowhere more strongly than here. Here, what wickedness there is, is *inconsistent* wickedness;—it is the folly, the guilty and the miserable folly, of those who are now children of light, and are fast making themselves the children of darkness. The dreadful consistency of thorough evil, wicked principles leading naturally and deliberately to a wicked life,—the serving Baal, because you believe in Baal,—the disobeying Christ, because you have resolved that He shall not be your Saviour,—all this is as yet, I believe, far from you. If things be as I imagine, the expression of blasphemous opinions amongst you would be received with horror: and if there were a single individual among you who cherished such in his heart, he would probably find it his interest, for his own credit's sake, to conceal them. As yet, then, God speaks to you as to his children:—as yet, you are his redeemed, with whom He shows all long-suffering and patience, entreating them to stand fast, and not to throw away the everlasting shelter which his love has provided for them. As yet you are his redeemed: take heed that you do not become his enemies. Take heed that you do not, like Cowper, give an unbeliever just cause to say, that it is greatly for your interest that he should be right, and you wrong;—for if your belief be right, you have nothing to expect but eternal misery. Think you,

that this notion will have no effect upon you? that it will be possible for you to go on long with the consciousness that it is your interest,—it is a dreadful thing to utter, but so it would be,—with the consciousness that it is your interest—to wish and believe Christianity to be a lie? No; it is impossible to go on long in such a state; the end is and must be one of three things; conversion,—a hardened and unbelieving heart,—or madness. One of the three must follow, whenever the contrast between what we believe to be true and our own evil lives, which practically deny it, is steadily presented before us. You know that, in Cowper's case, where there was a weakness of bodily constitution unable to bear such a struggle, the end was conversion,—but not without the horrors of madness: he was saved, but so as by fire. In common cases, where the bodily frame is stronger, the conflict is settled, one way or the other, before the mind is utterly distracted by its continuance: it settles either into the peace of God, or the peace of death. But let me not be misunderstood: it may be the peace of God, and yet not perfect peace, and far less peace that shall never again be broken; it may be the peace of death, and yet not untroubled with occasional alarms and warnings, and not, therefore, beyond the possibility of being broken in time, ere the last trumpet shall scatter it to the winds for ever. But it is the

peace of death, when men have quieted their consciences as to their daily living, without having their lives reformed according to the Spirit of Christ. It is the peace of death, when men put the Scriptures from them habitually, and either leave off their devotions altogether, or continue them as an unmeaning form. They may not have said to themselves, "There is no God:" but they have managed to say it practically; for, without longing to become like God, or caring to please Him, they are not disturbed by the fear of his anger. They may attend Christian worship, and speak respectfully of Christianity; but its realities are no realities to them; they set aside the question of salvation, as a thing which they do not like to enter upon. And thus they live in ordinary times peacefully enough: but if danger comes near them, either personally or to the state of society around them,—if they have reason to think that death is near,—then they find their peace troubled: it is not proof against all assaults; it must be secured not only by setting aside the Gospel of Christ, but by trampling it under foot. The neutral state is no longer possible; the question is brought to an issue: and they, who have hitherto not been the friends of Christ, are tempted to become his open enemies; they, who hitherto have not thought of his Gospel, now boldly deny and revile it. So, on the other

hand, with those who are living in the peace of God.—I call it the peace of God, when a man, having endured for a time the struggle between his sins and God's will, is enabled by the Holy Spirit to end it, by making his sins give way to his principles; by altering his heart and life, in conformity to his Saviour's image. Then the man is justified and sanctified, and, in St. Paul's strong language, confidently anticipating that what has so well begun, will end no less happily, he is saved. But St. Paul himself explains his meaning, by saying, that "he is saved in hope," not actually: and where there is hope there must be uncertainty, and there may be fear. The sins that were overcome will rise again to the struggle; or, as life goes on, and older years bring other temptations, it will not be the sins which he once overcame, and which he may more easily conquer again, from having conquered them once already; but it will be others, whose strength he has not yet tried; an appeal to passions within him, of whose force he never till now had cause to be aware. And here is the need of watchfulness and prayer, that such a danger may never find us unprovided; never find us without a just suspicion of our own weakness; never without a deep and lively knowledge of our Redeemer's strength. But, at any rate, the peace of our hearts is broken; and struggles and dangers, for a time at least,

interrupt it. Nor may we be sure that it will be only for a short time ; it may go on for years ; not so, indeed, as that our peace is altogether lost, or that we are ever tempted to wish God's word untrue ; but yet, so as that our perceptions of its truth may be less keen : and though our will to subdue our sins to Christ be unvaried, and its efforts continual, yet it may always find it opposed by the law in our members, and sometimes be overcome by it. Surely, if it were not so, St. Paul would have had no need to bid us put on the whole armour of God ; for armour cannot be wanted if we are never to go into battle.

I have gone on to things in life far beyond what your experience has yet reached to :—nay, inasmuch as I have carried forward my thoughts to the very end of our earthly course, I have anticipated my own experience also. But so it is,—that when we have reached the top of the hill, we can look down it before us as well as behind us,—and while the ascent is yet fresh in our recollections, if not actually in our sight, we can see the path by which we have to go down to the conclusion of our journey. Nor can the map, if I may so call it, of any part of the journey of life, be without its uses to you, by whom, in the natural course of things, it must all be travelled over. Would to God, that while your age yet renders it impossible for

you to be settled in the peace of death, you might shelter yourselves in the peace of God; that, being children of light, you would walk as such; that, having everlasting habitations prepared for you, you would early prepare yourselves, by an entire turning to God, for entering into them.

SERMON XXIX.

GEN. XXXIV. 30.—*And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites : and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me ; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.*

SUCH are the words which Jacob addressed to his sons after the slaughter of the Shechemites. We see that he does not speak to them of the guilt of their action, but of its rashness :—they had provoked by it all the people of the land who had hitherto suffered him and his house to sojourn amongst them ; but if they found these strangers guilty of such acts of violence, they were likely to join together, and destroy them as a common enemy. Mere prudence, however, weighs little against the impulses of strongly excited passion. The answer of the young men was ready, “ ‘ Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot ? ’ Were we coolly to think of the future danger to ourselves, when we had sustained so gross an insult ? Let the consequences be what they may, we have avenged the honour of our house, and we do not repent of the deed.” To this Jacob made no reply, for it is seldom that mere considerations of

prudence can stand their ground against an excited sense of honour; they seem so cowardly and so unworthy, when urged on such an occasion, that we feel ashamed to press them.

There came a time, however, when Jacob was taught to judge the action of Simeon and Levi differently; when he no longer blamed it as imprudent, but detested it as wicked: not speaking of it as possibly affecting his own interests, but as being in itself, under whatever show of honour it was veiled, cruel and accursed. Hear how he judges of it as his words are given in Gen. xlix. 5, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

Now what was it that made Jacob now form so much truer a judgment of an action, of which before he had spoken so differently? The time and the place at which these last words were uttered will explain this. Jacob was now going the way of all the earth; the words were uttered from his death-bed. Then not only was the spirit of prophecy poured out

upon him, that he should foretel the future fortunes of his posterity ; but something better still than prophecy, a truer knowledge of what was really good and really evil. Then all those mists of passion, of evil example, of prejudice, of contented acquiescence in the world's notions, which in our lifetime are apt to impair our judgment, were all rolled away before the rising light of another world. So it is ; Death is a sure and true teacher : but they are blessed for whom he does not unteach all their former notions, but rather set to his decisive seal, that they were right and good.

Every one of us, the best as well as the worst among us, will however find that death, whenever it comes, will alter many of his feelings ; nor is this any matter of blame to us. It is not our fault that our bodies are not yet incorruptible ; that our knowledge is employed about things which must be done away. We need not wish, therefore, but rather the contrary, to feel in all respects at this moment as we shall feel when we are on our death-beds. It would not be wisdom, but disease, if we were now as insensible to all beautiful sights, to all sweet sounds, to all pleasant savours, to all the stirring influences of air and light, as we shall be when our mortal frame is perishing. Nor would it be wisdom, but folly, if, fondly anticipating another state, instead of labouring to prepare

ourselves for it, we were to be as indifferent to earthly knowledge, to science, to philosophy, to history, to poetry, to all that strengthens, and enlarges, and enriches, and ennobles our understandings, during this our absence from our heavenly home, as we shall feel when that absence is at length expiring, when the everlasting portals are opening before our eyes, and God Himself will vouchsafe to be the object of our understanding and of our love. No, my brethren, our earthly work must be done during the time of our earthly pilgrimage; and that is but a foolish and fanatical piety which would teach us to neglect it. Our bodies and our understandings are God's: let us use them as the honoured instruments of his glory here by doing his work, till the time shall come when He will fit them for a higher use, making the one put on incorruption, and elevating the other far above all its present doubts and ignorances, that they may not only do his will but enjoy his presence.

In this, then, death will not unteach us the lesson of our past life, but finding that we have learnt it sufficiently, will call us on to something beyond it. And it were well if this were all: well indeed, if we were so living, as to have nothing hereafter to unlearn. But we know too well that this is not so; we know that in our affections there is but too much of which

we shall be heartily ashamed ; that we are not at all preparing ourselves for death's more perfect lesson. We know that feelings of pride, of indolence, of unkindness, of selfishness, are now constantly within us, to which we shall then wonder how we could ever have let ourselves be subject. We know that now God's love and God's approbation are but of slight value in our minds, when compared with the love and approbation of men. And we know also but too often how the love and approbation of men weigh as nothing in the scale, when compared with the gratification of ourselves. How bitterly shall we mourn over these feelings, in that hour when one little act of kindness will be more grateful to our memories than a whole life of enjoyment ; when the fullest glory that ever the voices of men could give, will seem utterly worthless in comparison of the slightest sign that we are approved of by God !

I say that death will unteach us much that we have long learnt and practised in life. But there are some cases when the false lesson of life is not untaught in death, but at the judgment. Sometimes it has been learnt in life so deeply, that even in death we still persist in it ; our eyes have been so long blinded, that nothing less than the Son of Man coming in his glory to judge the quick and dead can open them. These are the cases alluded to in the Scripture, where

it says, that the wicked has no bands in his death; he has hardened himself so thoroughly, that he dies without any of the pangs of remorse. But there are other cases, far less dreadful indeed, and much more common. It happens very frequently that death does not make us unlearn the lesson of our lives, because its attack is so sudden and strong that we can neither learn nor unlearn any thing. It is, I believe, very rarely that the mind retains its faculties amidst the dissolution of the body. Either absolute delirium overthrows it, or the weakness of exhaustion unnerves it. There is then no power to consider the past or to dread the future; it is all either a blank, or a confused mass of objects, which we have lost the ability to arrange in their order. Man indeed cannot tell with certainty what may be working within the bosom of a dying brother; there may be even then groanings not uttered distinctly to any mortal ear, which the Spirit of Christ has inspired, and which He, according to whose will the Spirit's intercession is ever made, will be pleased to listen to and to bless. It is charity to hope that this may be so in the case of another; but it is madness to trust to it in our own. Christ's words teach us a more solemn lesson: "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came;" even they who were aware of their danger found that they had no time to

remedy it : but what shall be said of those, who were never aware of it at all? How could they get the oil which they could not even so much as feel their need of? Alas! if the lamp be not burning when the bridegroom's call is heard, I know not where or how we can then get the oil to kindle it.

And therefore I confess that I attach but little value to any prayers that can be said, to any exhortations that can be addressed to any one, when the stroke of death is on him. It does seem to me, so far as man can judge, that the state of trial is then over. With the certainty of death before our eyes, if we are in possession of our reason, and not utterly hardened into unbelief, we must be glad to do any thing that would save us from the wrath to come. But this is but coming to God of necessity, when the world has nothing else to offer. Of course, in proportion to the hope of longer life is the degree of our trial; and if a man thinks that he may yet recover, he is so far yet able to choose between God and sin : but the heart cannot fairly be said to be turned to God, when sin is no longer possible.

The lesson of death then can rarely, I fear, be taught with any avail, when we have not begun to learn it earlier. But it may be learnt in life, and learnt to our eternal benefit. It may be learnt in health, it may be learnt in sickness, if

that sickness be not of too serious a kind. And here it is, I think, that we are apt to be too neglectful. If we are attacked by any slight complaint, we do not then think of religion; nor do we, even if it becomes more painful and lingering, so long as we do not think it dangerous. But the moment that we think we are going to die, that is, when our trial is over, then we are anxious to have prayers read to us, then we want to hear the word of God, then too we often desire to partake of that communion, for which, while it might have been a means of grace, we cared not. This is a fault very common, I fear, and for which we have all greatly to reproach ourselves. Whereas, slight indispositions do, in fact, teach us part of the lesson of death; but they offer to teach it us in time. Even a day's loss of appetite, a day's or a night's restlessness, a day's want of interest in our common business and amusements, does but speak in gentle language what we must one day hear in thunder. But because it is so gentle, therefore it is the more such as the Spirit of God would choose to teach us in. O that we would listen to these mild warnings, to that gracious language which does not yet terrify, but would only remind us that it will one day speak more sternly! Now when there is so much of this language addressed to us,—so much of sickness that is not what we call dangerous,—which we might turn so easily

to our everlasting profit, why will we wait till it assume that more fearful form, when it is more like a judgment than a chastisement;—more apt to cut us short in our sins than to turn us away from them? It is indeed a fatal error which keeps the Bible out of the chamber of sickness, and only calls for it when it is become the chamber of death.

And now, in conclusion, what is the lesson which death will teach us, if we retain our senses, but which will then be too late, and which therefore must be learnt beforehand? In one word, the lesson is to walk in the fear and love of God, through Jesus Christ, or, to use our Saviour's own language, "This is life eternal; to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This is all in all,—and so you know it to be. It is not to know God and Christ, if you merely hear about them on Sundays or at particular times; with attention, perhaps, only half excited; with affections altogether cold. But if we were to think of them daily and often, with interest, with fear, with love unfeigned?—if God were to be with us in our work and in our play to check the false tongue, the violent hand, the proud, or sensual, or covetous thought, the indolent temper, the unkind or selfish or unjust action, would it not indeed be life eternal? Yes, you know it would be no less: if God is indeed

your God, the God of your understandings, the God of your hearts, you know that you would be pure and holy and happy: if you hear the voice of the Son of God now, and are aroused by it from the death of sin, you know with a full assurance of faith, that even from the grave you will hear it no less, when He calls you not to a life of faith, but to a crown of glory.

SERMON XXX.

EPH. VI. 13.—*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

THE Ephesians, to whom these words are addressed, lived, as we know, in the very beginning of the Gospel: they had been converted by St. Paul himself, and not only had seen him do miracles, but some of their own number had also themselves received gifts of the Holy Spirit, and had been enabled to work miracles on others. —We cannot doubt, from what is mentioned both in the Acts of the Apostles and in other writings, of the habits of the first Christians, that they were frequently in the practice of receiving the Lord's Supper. Nor were these means of improvement neglected; for St. Paul assures them that he had heard of their faith in Christ, and of their love to their fellow-Christians; and continually gave thanks to God for them. Yet after all this, he did not think it needless to address them in the words of the text; to warn them of the evil that would continually beset them, to advise them earnestly to put on the whole armour of God, lest in their contest with evil they might be overcome by it. What St. Paul did not think needless for the

Ephesian Christians, we cannot think unnecessary to us. Even those of us who have this morning attended at the Lord's table, and made, I doubt not, sincere resolutions of remembering Christ's death always, in their lives and actions; they have done no more than the Ephesians did, who yet were urged by St. Paul to put on the whole armour of God. Indeed, they who are best disposed, are the very persons on whom this may be urged with the greatest advantage. They are ready to arm themselves for the battle, and have a good heart for the danger before them. They then, and all of us here assembled, may alike hear to our profit what that armour of God is, which may enable us to meet our enemy undismayed, and in the end to triumph over him.

The first three points which are spoken of do not require such particular notice. The loins girt about with truth, and the breastplate of righteousness, are expressions often used to express that sincerity of purpose, that strength of an honest conscience, which must be at the bottom of all excellence, and the feet shod with Christian readiness, for such is the meaning of the words which are rather obscurely translated, "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," are also an obvious figure to signify, that without activity and alertness, a man's good principles and good resolutions are little

better than useless. But these parts of the Christian's armour are not peculiar to the Christian; sincerity of purpose, uprightness, and activity in doing what we know to be right, are common to all good men of all times, who have any pretension to be called so. After these, however, the Apostle goes on to speak of what are peculiarly a Christian's arms; that is, the "shield of faith," the "helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." And these it may be worth our while to consider somewhat more fully.

It may be said, however, at the outset, that although the three things here spoken of are distinct in themselves, and can very well be considered separately, yet that in practice it is almost impossible that they should exist for any length of time without each other. We can see at once that the hope of salvation, which is the Apostle's own explanation of what he means by the word "helmet," and the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," cannot well exist without faith. A man cannot hope for heaven, if he does not believe in God's promises, nor use the Scripture with effect, if he does not believe that it contains the words of truth. But neither can the faith exist long without the hope of salvation, and the use of the word of God. At least, if the faith may be said to exist, it will be no shield to us, such as the

Apostle speaks of; it will be a faith strong only when there is nothing to try it, but if ever we attempt to raise it up against the storm of temptation, we shall find that every arrow can pierce through it: shield, and helmet, and sword, as described by the Apostle, must go together, or we shall soon be despoiled of them all.

There is nothing new in this; it has been said often, nay, it has been said, I believe, by myself more than once from this very place: but yet it is one of those things which cannot well be said too often. It is found that the yearly subscriptions to some of the religious Societies have fallen off, and we hear lamentations over the growth of unbelief. Now this for the most part is owing to this, that men have not worn habitually the helmet of hope, nor used the sword of the Spirit, and therefore their faith has stood only while there was no one to attack it. Nothing can be more notorious, than that the hope of salvation is not that strong and inspiring principle which it ought to be. When the Apostle calls it a helmet, his notion is, that as a man with his head bare would naturally shrink back from the press of battle, would stoop and cower to avoid his enemy's blows, so the hope of a Christian should, like a helmet, make him carry himself erectly and boldly, pressing forwards, and looking upwards, like one

whose most vital part was well secured. Nor can any thing be more plain again, than that men have not fully used the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. By calling it the sword, the Apostle means, I believe, that a full sense of the truth and excellence of Christ's promises, and of the scheme revealed in the Scripture, and of the principles of life there given, enables us to combat victoriously against falsehood and wickedness: that a Christian ought to know his own strength better than to be standing for ever on the defensive, merely answering or trying to answer a host of petty objections; that he should go forth boldly, protesting against, exposing, and putting down the manifold follies and evils of unchristian principles: showing what are the gods which the world worships; how false, how vile, how thoroughly and necessarily degrading to their worshippers. But this cannot be done except by those who know and can appeal to the fruits of Christianity on the other side. If we have not this knowledge, if we have never really found the value of the revelation of Christ; if it has never taught us to bear pain or sorrow more patiently, and joy more soberly; if it has never softened our tempers, increased our love to our neighbour, made us more watchful over ourselves, more careful of our time and of the way in which we spend our money; if it has

never influenced our views in life for ourselves or for our children; if success has still been what we have most followed, and disappointment what we have most dreaded; if we have never learnt to forgive when injured, to be meek-spirited and patient with others, knowing how much we offend ourselves; above all, if it has never taught us to flee from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; I see not what we have to do with the sword of the Spirit: we cannot use it; for truly its power would act against ourselves: the first mass of falsehood and evil which it would pierce through and rend to pieces would be that within our own bosoms.

Conceive then a man going forth into the world without either the sword of the Spirit or the helmet of salvation; his conduct and heart not habitually guided by Christ's Spirit, and his mind therefore not fully aware of the excellence and power of the Gospel, and his views for the future not steadied and exalted by an enduring hope of the glory which shall be revealed. Now then what think we is such a man's faith? Is it indeed a deep and abiding sense of what God and Christ have done for him; that assuredly he is forgiven because Christ died, that because Christ rose, he also shall rise hereafter? Nothing of the sort: it is what is called a belief in Christianity, a belief in the Bible; that Jesus Christ did miracles, and that the Bible is true. He

makes his belief a theoretical matter, involving ten thousand points, infinitely various in importance, and some of them of no importance at all. Any attack on any point contained in any of the books of the Old or New Testament, questions critical, scientific, or historical, all fill him with alarm and uneasiness; all seem to him to be an attack upon his religion; he thinks that if he cannot answer them, the enemy must be right, and Christianity a fable. And it often happens that he cannot answer them; and then his faith, if we may call by this name what, indeed, never in the Scripture sense of the word deserved it, becomes as weak as his hope had ever been: he knows no more of the shield of faith than he had ever done of the sword of the Spirit.

I cannot forbear mentioning, as an instance of what I mean, the mischievous effects which I have known to be produced on young men's minds by reading such works as that of Gibbon. It is, indeed a most dangerous work to the belief of those who have neither helmet nor sword; nor, in the full Scripture sense of the term, shield of faith, either. The writer, who, unhappily, knew not what the fruits of the Gospel are; and who, besides, was very ill acquainted with the New Testament itself, as a mere book, delights in exposing the faults and weaknesses of Christians, and in sneering at

particular doctrines, or facts, or characters, or in questioning the genuineness of particular passages, in the volumes of the Old and New Testament. The doctrines, taken away from every thing practical, stated not in the broad and impressive language of the Scripture, but with the endless subtilties and littlenesses with which theologians in their controversies invested them, are easily represented as either uncharitable or unimportant, to him who has never himself used them aright, and knows not their intrinsic power. The faults and follies of Christians seem to be the natural fruits of Christianity, to him who knows not from experience what its real fruits are; while splendid faults are easily made to appear virtue in his eyes who has never been in the habit of thinking practically about good and evil, nor of examining his ways according to the mind of the Spirit of God. And the attacks innumerable on a hundred trifling points in the volumes of the two Testaments are disturbing to one who considers all such matters as affecting the truth of Christ's Gospel, and who finds also the unfair and foolish manner in which such attacks are sometimes attempted to be answered. While, on the other hand, because the man has not the sword of the Spirit of Christ, he knows not how to meet such a book as Gibbon's on higher ground; to expose with mingled indignation

and pity the numberless inconsistencies, the low profligacy, the gross moral ignorance of good and evil, which prevail through it from one end to the other ; so that, seeing there what are the fruits of another spirit, and having the happiness to know himself what are the fruits of Christ's Spirit, he looks upon the book as affording no less evidence to the truth of God, than was afforded of old by the holy lives of the first Christian societies, when compared with those who frequented the disgraceful festivals of the gods of the heathens.

He who is armed with the helmet of hope and with the sword of the Spirit, will, indeed, be sure to hold fast the shield of faith. And being so armed, he will be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. "In the evil day," whether we refer it merely to the common trials and temptations of life, which are sure to beset us ; or whether we may look forward now to the coming of one of those periods of severer trial, with which the Church of Christ has from time to time been visited : in either case, whatever may be reserved for this generation, and judging only by what is actually before our eyes, it is impossible not to feel the deepest interest for every individual who successively goes forth from this place to enter upon life's harder trials. It is impossible not to wish, not to pray most earnestly, that he

may be enabled by God's grace to put on the whole armour of God. It is impossible not to desire that he should possess in their fulness the spirit of truth, and the spirit of love : of truth, to discern his way steadily amidst so strange a mass of conflicting and opposite errors ; of love, that if ever through the difficulty of discerning truth, he be led into error, yet that an abounding love of Christ, the true salt of the soul, may render his error, to himself at least, so far as regards his highest and eternal welfare, harmless. We may desire, and we may labour, but man cannot deliver his brother. The victory rests with yourselves and with God. But pray and labour earnestly to obtain the true sword of the Spirit ; to know by experience what are the riches of the power of Christ's Gospel ; how it opens the eyes of the understanding, as well as enlarges the noblest of our affections ; for it is most truly written, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." The world is before him like a map, containing, indeed, parts of yet undiscovered and undiscoverable country—for the first source and fountains of that great river of evil, who has found, or who can find?—but yet, in its main points, and in their bearings upon each other, sufficiently intelligible. This is their privilege who have learnt in sincerity to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of his death, and the glory of his resurrection.

There is our corner-stone, which never can be shaken, that fact better proved than any other recorded in history—that He, whose words and whose life displayed the wisdom of God, and the goodness of God, overcame death to display the power of God also: that goodness and wisdom, through the power of God, are too mighty to be lost for ever in the grave. When dwelling on his words, who spake as never man spake; when looking on his actions, who went about doing good; when our spirits are moved in complete union with his Spirit, and we feel that it is good for us to be with Him in life or in death; that with Him we would venture our every hope, and submit to his guidance our every affection and desire; then it is that we can enter somewhat into the joy of those words, worthy, indeed, to be proclaimed by an angel's voice, which tell us, that the Lord is risen. From the darkness of that grave in which all else on earth are lost to our view, He is risen, and ascended to the eternal light beyond it. And then we turn with thankfulness and joy unutterable to our own promised share in his triumph; that He is gone to prepare a place for us; that He will come again, and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there may we be also.

ADDRESS BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

ALTHOUGH it is very true that where great stress is laid upon any one particular crisis in our spiritual life, and where a strict preparation has been made for it, the effect, as soon as it is over, is often exceedingly shortlived, and people, feeling themselves in a manner released from something that was hanging over them, run wild with even the greater eagerness, in consequence of their late restraint: although there be this danger attending any unwonted effort, if made too violently, and especially in matters that concern our souls, yet as no good is to be done without such an effort, and as it need not be overstrained or excessive, so I think that the preparation for confirmation may be of the greatest use to you; and I would not lose this opportunity of turning it, so far as I can, to your lasting benefit.

I take it for granted, that of the uses and duties of confirmation in general, you must have

some tolerable notion, from what has been said to you about it, and from what you have read yourselves. That you are now, in a manner, beginning again your Christian course, with the promises of the Gospel again personally addressed to you, and a renewed call to you, to be disposed in heart and mind to live as believing them, you will have learnt already; and I need not now repeat it to you. What I wish to do, is to speak of confirmation as it concerns you who are now here assembled, in the particular situation in which you are placed, some of you being very shortly to enter upon the business of active life, or on a state of more immediate preparation for it; and the greater part being likely still to continue for a time exposed to the peculiar temptations of a school, and having to discharge its peculiar duties.

And, for the first of these two classes, there is no promise in the Scripture, which is more certainly confirmed by experience, than where Christ has told us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that, then, all other things shall be added unto us: that is, that the surest way to earthly happiness, as well as to that which comes after death, is to begin life and to go through it with steady Christian principles. I do not mean, by Christian principles, a firm profession of belief in the Christian religion; still less, a respect, however sincere,

for the Church and its institutions. Officers of the army and navy have, I fear, on this point, often fatally deceived themselves: they think sometimes, that in their profession, if they are regular in attending and enforcing the attendance of their men at divine service on a Sunday,—if they avoid swearing and profane language, and try to keep up respect to religion and its ministers amongst those under their command or influence,—they may safely consider themselves as true Christians. But he is a Christian, who, for the love of Christ, and with prayer for the help of Christ's Spirit, struggles against the besetting temptations of his particular calling. And in the world in general, but most especially in the army and navy, the great and besetting temptation is to prefer the praise of men to the praise of God, and to dread the reproach of men more than the reproach of God. Where this feeling is not earnestly struggled with, it obtains in a short time such a dominion, that we shall certainly act in every point as it leads us. The most degrading personal cowardice is not so complete a bondage as the cowardice which fears to be called coward. The most timid man alive would be ashamed to say, and to accustom himself to think, that if he were placed in a situation of danger, he must fly from it. However fearful his nature, he would struggle against his weakness, and pray earnestly, and earnestly

labour, that if he were to be tried with severe pain and danger, they might not overpower his firmness : and there are many instances of persons, constitutionally timid, thus bracing themselves, and being supported by God ; so that their resolution has endured amidst the most appalling dangers and the most fearful torments. But moral cowardice,—or the fear of what man can do, not to kill the body, but to inflict shame and insult on the mind,—men do not scruple to confess that they would yield to. They will expose their own lives, and risk taking away the lives of others, in personal quarrels, because they have been accustomed to set such a value on the good opinion of the world, that the temptation of dishonour is one which they are not strong enough to resist.

For those, then, who are soon going to enter upon active life, the most earnest prayer that I would urge them to make to God, on this solemn occasion, is, that He would enable them to overcome this most fearful temptation, the dread of the censure or dishonour of the world. In our state of life, Christ's solemn warning may be most profitably altered in word that we may most effectually preserve its spirit. We do not now so much need to be told, "Fear not them who kill the body:" bodily sufferings in the path of our duty are no longer our worst dangers; Christ now says to us, Fear not them who can

vex the mind and feelings with dishonour and insult for a few short years, and after that have no more that they can do ; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear : fear Him who is able to cast you into the lowest pit of shame and dishonour for ever, yea, I say unto you, fear Him.

In truth, however, if, on your first entrance into life, you follow Christ in sincerity and without affectation, your path will be spared this severe trial. Even the world respects a man who is a consistent Christian, and allows that he should act in his own way, and from his own motives. At any rate, whatever trial you have to encounter, will be chiefly at the very beginning. Before a young man is thoroughly known, his Christian principles and practice may be suspected of hypocrisy ; but it depends upon himself how long the suspicion may last. You will confirm it most seriously, if your principles are seen to be strict on points which you have no inclination for, but lax in the case of your own favourite tastes. If a timid man, who is passionate in his language, and licentious in his life, first provokes a quarrel by the violence of his tongue, and then endeavours to get out of it, by speaking of the sin of fighting, it is manifest, that he would very naturally be thought a coward, who only made his principles a cloak to

save him from what he did not like, not a restraint to curb himself from indulging in those vices which he did like. And another great protection to the principles of a young man, is to connect himself closely with Christian friends. Two men of the same age, intimate with one another, and both in earnest in their desire to please God, are a strength and support to each other of incalculable value. A larger number of such friends becomes still more invincible to temptation; and to say nothing of other advantages, should our acting steadily on Christian principles ever expose us to the ridicule or contempt of the world, how greatly is such a trial lessened, when those whom we most love and value continue to honour and respect us, because their estimate of life is the same with our own.

I may seem to have been long upon this subject; but what I have said is in truth the great lesson of life, and a few minutes need not be grudged to hearing it. It is this too in which you most need confirmation: for in your struggles against common vices, the world itself will help you; in condemning idleness, and meanness, and falsehood, and unkindness, and ill-nature, the world and the Gospel are agreed. It is to run the race of Christians that you are now preparing; and that must needs be most difficult, where not the flesh only but the world, are united to obstruct

it. So, too, for those among you who are still to continue here some time longer; your danger is greatest, and your need of confirmation, or the help of God; is most urgent, where the world in which you live exercises its influences against your progress. To you I need not speak of the vices of meanness and ill-nature, for even the voice of the world in which you live condemns these. But as the world of men is far less pure than the Spirit of God, so the opinion of the world of boys is even less pure than that of men. Idleness, which in after life is despised, is, perhaps, rather encouraged by the voice of that society in which you are now living; selfish extravagance, and the practice of incurring debts, too lightly censured in manhood, are here, I fear, scarcely censured at all. The plain common-sense notion, that your interest and mine, are, in fact, the same;—that school regulations are not laid on, or enforced, out of a petty love of power or moroseness, and that, therefore, it is all fair to evade them, but are intended solely to train and accustom you to do what a few years hence you would be ashamed not to do; that the principles and feelings which I wish to inspire amongst you are but those in which all good men have lived and died, and in which, by God's blessing, I hope to live and die myself;—this plain way of looking at your

present state, and the views of conduct which would follow it, are not yet established amongst you. The fact is, that public opinion, in schools, is in many points the opinion exactly of the most worthless members of them, which they spare no pains to enforce, and to which, the well-disposed yield out of weakness. Indeed, if we could ever safely or innocently wish for one evil to cast out another, I should almost say, that a boy, when placed at a public school, would find pride a most valuable safeguard to his principles: he would then scorn to be led blindly in the track of others; he would look with disgust and contempt upon the low principles which he has heard advanced around him, and the low practice which flowed from them. But what pride could not do without causing other evils at the same time—uncharitableness towards others, and a dangerous satisfaction in ourselves—that the Spirit of Christ, whose aid will be to-morrow in a particular manner implored for you, will enable you to do in meekness and in tenderness. If you examine your own hearts and lives by the light of the Scripture, you will find cause enough to make you humble for yourselves, and indulgent to others: but if you strive, also, to walk by the light of the Spirit, you will be bold and decided in thinking for yourselves, and in doing what you yourselves

approve, without caring for the opinion of your companions. And as the public opinion among boys, as well as men, is swayed by the influence of decided characters, so two or three individuals, steadily and quietly acting as they think right, will in a short time, be like a leaven, to leaven the whole mass: they will win over to their side that number, in all societies, who follow the turn of the stream; and the bad will be left in that state in which it is our hope that they may be hereafter in the universe—a minority of unmixed evil.

Therefore I would say to all of you, if you wish to avail yourself usefully of this solemn occasion,—if you wish to be really confirmed in Christian principles,—let your most earnest prayer to God be, that you may follow Christ with a single mind and a single heart, not with affections divided between Him and his enemies, with a wish to please Him when it will not interfere with pleasing the world. Attach yourselves to your Saviour who has died for you, and let Him be indeed your bread of life for ever. I use the forcible language of Scripture for the purpose of impressing upon your minds, that the simplest and surest way to learn all holiness and all goodness, is to learn a personal love and trust for that gracious Saviour in whom God has made Himself comprehensible

to man, whom we may look to at this moment as standing in his own human form at the right hand of the Majesty on high, our Redeemer, our Lord, and our God. This is Christianity, this is life eternal,—to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And this, although the very language of it may seem strange to your ears, is nothing extravagant, nothing foolish, nothing to make you affected in manner or behaviour, to make you ignorant, or to make you gloomy. True it is, it does require that you should be in earnest; that you should feel, that this world, beautiful as it is, and the rich happiness that even yet is to be found in it, is not our eternal portion; that as all these things must pass away, and we must dwell for ever with God or with the devils, it is our wisdom to learn to know God and to love Him here, even in our youth, or else heaven, even if we were to be admitted there, could afford us no enjoyment. True it is, that our evil and careless nature will require many efforts to change it; and the best of those efforts must be our prayers. True it is, that you must pray when your prayers are not a mere form; that you must read the Scriptures, when you are not called to read them as your lesson. You have much to do; but that ought not to discourage you in the full activity of

youthful spirit, when to do is to enjoy. You have much to overcome ; and if you leave the chapel to-morrow, with hearts ever so much warmed and resolutions ever so earnest, yet you will be sure ere long to slacken in your efforts. Zeal will cool, and resolutions will be broken. But be not afraid :—Christ's blood cleanseth us from all sin ; Christ's Spirit can give us at the last the victory. Be most afraid of carelessness, of forgetting God altogether, of letting days, and weeks, and months pass by, unmarked by any spiritual improvement, and, therefore, surely marked by spiritual decay. If this be your case, I pray that God in his mercy may visit you with disappointments, with distress, with sickness, with any sorrow that may awaken you in time, and save you from the sorrow that worketh death. Better a thousand times that you should give all the world in exchange, than that you should lose your own souls. And now remember, that in this rite of confirmation, and in the words that you have now heard, you have received a talent for which you must answer at the judgment-seat of Christ. It may be either, with God's blessing, the seed of your eternal life, or a savour of death unto death, heightening your guilt, if you know, and were warned, and yet refuse to listen. It is my duty to place this responsibility upon you,

as Christ has charged his ministers, and as He did Himself. May God grant that we may each give our account with joy, and not with grief; and that when our Lord shall call us out of our graves to meet his coming, we may stand at his right hand together, amongst the number of his redeemed.

THE END.

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